

SIGN LIST



STUDIES

IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

(SUPPLEMENTS TO *NUMEN*)

XXVI

HATHOR AND THOTH

TWO KEY FIGURES
OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION



LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1973

HATHOR AND THOTH

TWO KEY FIGURES OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION

BY

Dr C. J. BLEEKER

Emeritus Professor of the History and the Phenomenology of Religions
Amsterdam

With 4 plates



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To the memory of my dear wife

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PREFACE

As a rule, the preface is written after a work has been completed. These preliminary words addressed to the reader form no exception to this rule. The author can reflect on his study. The reader has still to read it. To make it easier for him to follow the thread of the argument, the author wishes to formulate proleptically and briefly both the underlying principles and the final outcome of his research.

As student of the history of religions, the author has been guided by the tenet of the Dutch historian J. HUIZINGA that the study of history should begin with a well-formulated question.¹ It is useless to amass data in the hope that they will compose themselves into an elegant, historical mosaic. Right from the beginning one must know what problem has to be solved. That is why the French student of the history of religions JEAN BAYET repeatedly stated that "on ne peut pas pratiquer l'histoire des religions comme on démontre un mécanisme d'horlogerie".² No matter how critical the historian may be by nature, his true motivation must be the desire to make the past live again. BAYET expressed this maxim as follows: "Il faut entendre par là que l'historien est devant les faits à la fois critique et en sympathie agissante. "Lazare, lève-toi!" : il faut que le mort ressuscite."³ In a like sense, HUIZINGA quotes the words of J. MICHELET: "L'histoire c'est une résurrection".⁴ In this study an attempt is made to make the Egyptian gods Hathor and Thoth live again.

The views which determined my approach to this study on the history of religion should, I believe, be made quite clear at the beginning, for obviously diverse interpretations can be given to the task of the history of religion. The present author entertains great respect for the philological, archaeological and historical work of detail that is being carried out in the field of the history of religions, since he is very much aware of the large degree to which his own research must rely on this work of precision. But his aim is different: he endeavours to comprehend the meaning of the religious phenomena, naturally in a way

¹ J. HUIZINGA, *Cultuurhistorische verkenningen*, 1929, p. 12.

² J. BAYET, *Croyances et rites dans la Rome antique*, 1971, p. 8.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 223.

⁴ HUIZINGA, *op. cit.* p. 53.

that is justified philologically and historically. In the present study, therefore, he has tried to fathom the character and significance of Hathor and Thoth.

In his opinion these two gods are typical exponents of the religion of ancient Egypt. They may be said to be complementary. Hathor represents creative life, the momentum of ecstasy. Thoth is the wise god who gives laws to gods and mortals, who maintains the world order and ever and again restores harmony. These two Egyptian gods can be compared to Dionysus and Apollo, who represent enthusiasm and reflection respectively. Two figures, who mutually balanced, endowed the Greek spirit with its grandeur.

It may surprise non-Egyptologists that so much time and energy is spent on the reconstruction of two deities from ancient days. The answer to such an objection may, again, be found in the words of Michelet: "L'histoire c'est une résurrection". In what respect? In three respects Hathor and Thoth have something to impart to this age :

- 1 they symbolise the truth that it is impossible to conceive of a truly living concept of God which does not encompass harmoniously both an irrational and a rational element;
- 2 they make us realise that man can only become a true human being if he establishes an equilibrium between his dynamic élan and the reflection and discipline of his mind;
- 3 they teach that a homogeneous and sound culture rests on the belief that there exists a world order and that one must obey its creative wisdom, or perish. ¹

The tuning fork has set the tone. Reading can now begin.

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, "The Significance of the Religions of Antiquity", *J.E.O.L.* 1964; C.J. BLEEKER, *The Pattern of the Ancient Egyptian Culture* (Cahiers d'histoire mondiale, 1965).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"We gladden Thy Majesty daily
And Thy heart rejoices when Thou hearest our songs;
We rejoice when we behold Thee,
Every day, every day.
Our hearts are uplifted by the sight of Thy Majesty,
For Thou art the possessor of the garland of flowers,
The leader of the choral dance,
The bestower of the inebriety that knows no end." ¹

This is a strophe from the song sung by the seven Hathors to the great goddess Hathor. It contains the theme of the songs written in the course of centuries in ancient Egypt to honour Hathor. It also indicates the undertone of the worship of this goddess. Hathor was an imposing deity, respected because of her formidable power, but also loved for her mildness and her joyful, elated temperament.

The praise offered by the Egyptians to Thoth sounds less exuberant, though it does, nonetheless, testify clearly to the respect cherished for this god and to the great importance attributed to him. One of the most characteristic of the Thoth hymns runs as follows :

"Praised be thee, Lord of the great gods,
Possessor of the secrets that are in heaven and on earth,
Good god of eternity of old,
Who gave (us) the language and the scripture,
Who has the houses pass by inheritance,
Who founds the temples,
Who sees that the gods remain within the limits of their competence,
Each guild fulfils its obligations,
The countries know their frontiers,
And the fields their appurtenances." ²

It is my conviction that Hathor and Thoth are the two key figures of the ancient Egyptian religion. Re and Osiris are usually held to be not only the most important, but also the most characteristic Egyptian gods. No one would wish to deny, or could even detract from their

¹ H. JUNKER, "Poesie aus der Spätzeit," *Z.Ä.S.* 43, 1906.

² BORIS VON TURAJEFF, "Zwei Hymnen an Thoth," *Z.Ä.S.* 33, 1895.

significance. Still there is reason to wonder whether Hathor and Thoth are not more characteristic of the living, Egyptian piety.

The sun-god Re is praised in many hymns, but it is only in the famous hymn of Pharaoh Amenophis IV-Akhnaton that he emerges as a warm-blooded personality. Mostly he appears as a mythical figure, as the creator-god, the guarantor of kingship and of the body politic. His character as sun-god does not differ noticeably from that of the sun-gods encountered in other ancient religions.

The myth of Osiris was made famous by PLUTARCH's rendering of it. Only scattered allusions to the mythical adventures of Osiris are to be found in the Egyptian texts. There is no doubt that Osiris played an important role in the cult of the dead: in their longing for a blessed life after death, thousands placed their hope in him. All things considered, however, Osiris is a rather passive figure. In the drama of his death and resurrection it is the enterprising Isis who is the active person. Little wonder that later she became the leading character in the mysteries named after her, whereas Osiris almost dropped into oblivion.

The author of this work wishes to defend the thesis that Hathor and Thoth are the most striking representatives of the ancient Egyptian religion. These two deities do not constitute an inseparable pair, though they are depicted together and are linked by certain mythological relationships. Placed in an ideal context, they together exemplify in an expressive way the Egyptian religious sentiment. As may be expected of such a dynamic figure as Hathor, the part of this study which describes the many aspects of her being will be somewhat longer than that dealing with Thoth, for the latter was a god of a more homogeneous and harmonic nature. This, however, detracts in no way from his importance.

Obviously these two gods have already been dealt with repeatedly in studies, for example in an exemplary fashion by SCHAFIK ALLAM, "*Beiträge zum Hathorkult (bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches)*" (1963) and by P. BOYLAN, "*Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt*" (1922). The angle from which Hathor and Thoth are viewed in this book differs somewhat from that in the usual Egyptological study, in so far as attention is directed exclusively to the religious-historical significance of the gods in question. Consequently the author has omitted all sorts of details about Hathor and Thoth which do not add to our religious-historical insight. Such data remain silent till illuminated unexpectedly by new information. They remain significant for Egyptology, but are not pertinent to history of religions.

More specifically this study on history of religions will be conducted according to the phenomenological method. This is not the place to discuss more fully the nature and method of the phenomenology of religion. Reference might be made to the comments on this subject made by the author in various contexts.¹ Briefly the phenomenological method implies the unprejudiced observation of religious-historical data and the endeavour to determine their religious significance. This means that with an unbiassed, critical and yet understanding approach one must try to fathom the meaning of the religious phenomena. Like M. ELIADE, the author's aim is an "herméneutique totale", which said scholar described as : "En effet, l'histoire des religions n'est pas uniquement une discipline historique, comme, par exemple, l'archéologie ou la numismatique. Elle est également une *herméneutique totale*, puisqu'elle est appelée à déchiffrer et à expliquer toutes les rencontres de l'homme avec le sacré, de la préhistoire à nos jours."²

One consequence of this method of working is that care must be taken not to give a wrong interpretation to the data by using terms not adapted to the material. S. MORENZ, for example, has pointed out that the Egyptian language has no words for 'belief', 'religion' and 'piety', concepts which are constitutive not only for modern religious thought, but for every religious-historical investigation³. Of course 'religion' did exist in ancient Egypt. The lack of terms for it is instructive in two respects : apparently the Egyptians had not yet attained that stage of self-reflection in which general concepts are formed, and furthermore it would seem that the structure of their religion differed from that of ours.

Such considerations make it difficult to plunge straight away into the subject of this study. The investigation proper must be prefaced by certain considerations of principle, viz. (1) certain presuppositions to the study, (2) the nature of the Egyptian religion. It is the author's opinion that the significance of Hathor and Thoth can only be understood if one realises clearly, on the one hand, how the relevant material should be dealt with and interpreted and, on the other, if one is acquainted with the religious background which makes the aforesaid deities

¹ See some articles in C.J. BLEEKER, *The Sacred Bridge*, (1963). and C.J. BLEEKER, "Comparing the Religio-historical and the Theological Method," *Numen*, Vol. XVII, Fasc. 1.

² M. ELIADE, *La nostalgie des origines, méthodologie et histoire des religions*, 1969.

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A. CERTAIN PRESUPPOSITIONS TO THE STUDY

Reflection on the presuppositions to Egyptological studies is illuminating and even amusing, but it also leads to unexpected discoveries. Then it appears that what has been taken for granted contains unsuspected problems. In this respect the following points require looking into.

(1) In order to study Egyptology with profit, one must bear in mind the nature of the data available. Now an investigation of original sources is the golden rule of each historical, and hence of each religious-historical piece of research. Evidently the first thing to be done is to consult the texts. Little expertise is needed to know that the texts show many philological cruces. Supposing these obstacles are overcome, there still remains the big question as to what information the texts provide about the Egyptian religion in general and about Hathor and Thoth in particular. The answer to this question cannot be found until one is conversant with the nature of the Egyptian literature and especially with the character of the religious texts.

In point of fact only an extensive treatment of this subject can do justice to it, whereas the scope of this study admits of little more than a summary discussion.¹ To this end the best starting point is a remark of H. FRANKFORT in which he points out that epic and dramatic motifs are lacking in Egyptian literature and that the Egyptian sought his strength in the composing of songs and hymns and in the writing of short stories.² The same may be said of the nature of religious literature. The following genres can be distinguished in it: hymns to the gods; rituals for the daily temple service, the Osiris mysteries, the royal coronation, etc.; funerary texts; spells; books of wisdom; legends and a rare item with a theological purport which, however, is in the form of an eulogy of the deity in question. The striking aspect of these texts is that most of them have a cultic significance.³

The conclusion is that not a single text extant contains a detailed

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Religious Tradition and Sacred Books in Ancient Egypt*, (Holy Book & Holy Tradition, edited by F.F. BRUCE & E.G. RUFF, 1968.

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Fortunately there is yet another important device for fathoming the nature of the gods in question. That comprises the emblems and symbols associated with them and the attributes ascribed to them. At times these data are difficult to decipher, since there is no explanatory text. Still they are certainly typical of the complexion of the Egyptian mind. Apparently the Egyptians were to a large degree attuned to visual perception. This can be deduced, *inter alia*, from the hieroglyphic script, which can readily be demonstrated to have originated in picture-writing. In addition the innumerable representations in the temples and graves tell us that the Egyptians possessed a graphic talent. Hence it is understandable that they often depicted religious truths in symbols and did not describe them in words. Convincing evidence of this is to be found by leafing through the 'Mythological Papyri'.¹ These mortuary texts consist mainly of symbolic drawings. This example illustrates the significance of these symbolic representations for our subject.

(2) Next, attention should be paid to the characteristic style of the Egyptian culture and religion which suddenly emerged at the beginning of the historical period and which prevailed throughout the ages right up to the first centuries of the Christian era.² What description can be given of this style, which is also manifested in the figures of Hathor and Thoth? The best way to approach this style is to observe the architecture as expressed, for example, in the imposing colonnaded chamber of the temple of Amon at Karnak. There within a space measuring 103 by 52 metres are 134 columns ranged in 16 rows. A forest of columns of such vast dimensions that the onlooker feels dwarfed and

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is made to realise that the Egyptian knew and respected the 'mysterium tremendum' of their gods. And yet these enormous proportions do not have a depressing effect. The impression of majesty is compensated by the elegance of the hieroglyphic signs and of the figures of the gods and kings which embellish the columns. Here 'Würde' and 'Anmut' are harmoniously linked together, the badge of true art according to the poet SCHILLER.¹ This spirit also emanates from the representations of Hathor and Thoth and from the texts and symbols pertaining to these gods: on the one hand Hathor and Thoth are overpowering, majestic figures, but on the other they display a grace which understandably evoked the affection of the Egyptians.

(3) For a correct evaluation of the data from which the picture of Hathor must be pieced together, it is important that a correct conception be formed of the mental plane on which the ancient Egyptians lived. Clearly they possessed a profound religious intuition and a fine sense of art. Furthermore they were clever architects and competent organisers. But were they also capable of scientific research and philosophical speculation? That is doubtful. Their knowledge was more of a know-how, learning derived from experience and adapted to practice. S. SAUNERON, who demonstrated that the Egyptians had what for their time was a respectable knowledge of geography, astronomy, geometry, architecture, medicine and zoology and who ascribes to them "une véritable et appréciable culture", nevertheless is forced to admit that their "science sacrée est d'intention pratique - mais pratique dans le cadre d'un système spirituel donné; elle est aussi traditionnelle, hostile aux novations."² The fact, indicated above, that the Egyptian language lacks what we consider to be very essential religious-scientific concepts, proves that they were not masters of logic. H. JONAS, the famous expert on gnosticism, very rightly says: "For Greece had invented the *logos*, the abstract concept, the method of theoretical exposition, the reasoned system — one of the greatest discoveries in the history of the human mind."³ This level had not yet been reached by the Egyptians. Consequently no systematic development of their religious thoughts can be expected of them. E. DRIOTON confirms this opinion in the following passage: "Tous les écrits relatifs aux sciences

¹ J. CHR.F.SCHILLER, *Ueber Anmut und Würde*, Schillers Sämtliche Werke, 1838, elfter Band.

² S. SAUNERON, *Les prêtres de l'ancienne Égypte*, 1967, p. 111 sq.: La science sacrée.

³ H. JONAS, *The Gnostic Religion*, 1967, p. 21

qui nous sont parvenus de l'antiquité égyptienne ont le même caractère. Ce ne sont pas des traités proprement dits, car ils ne disposent pas logiquement leur matière, ni ne la traitent par voie de principes et de conséquences." ¹

The Greeks were, indeed, the ones who made certain myths accessible to us by systematising them. With his famous writing *Περὶ Ἰσίδος καὶ Ὀσιρίδος* PLUTARCH is the classical example of this. H. IDRIS BELL gives the following brief and trenchant formulation of the Greeks' concern with the ancient religions: "the systematically thinking Greek gave to these cults, when taken over, a coherence and systematic formulation often lacking in their original shape." ² This evokes the query whether, now and then, the Greeks did not 'modernise' the original religious thoughts in the process of their interpretation of them, a query that need not be answered within this framework. In any case it is understandable that the Egyptian texts offer no theological reflection on the essence of Hathor and Thoth. This in no way detracts from the originality and depth of conception entertained by the Egyptians for their gods and so for Hathor and Thoth. These divine beings do not speak to us in a polished language, but still they reveal their essence in a manifest and impressive way.

(4) The data pertaining to Hathor and Thoth are spread over the entire span of Egyptian religious history, that is to say over a period of time lasting more than 3000 years. Naturally many and great changes took place in the political, social and cultural spheres in the course of these centuries also. The religion must certainly have undergone certain metamorphoses. This fact provokes questions. The first one is whether a line of evolution can be traced which, of course, would then also apply to the worship of Hathor and Thoth. Various scholars have endeavoured to sketch a process of evolution or phases of religious evolution, for example J. H. BREASTED ³ and J. SPIEGEL ⁴, and for the earliest period K. SETHE. ⁵ Lack of space makes it impossible to demonstrate that these views cannot be said to be successful. Since data is extremely scarce, it is readily understandable that it is practically impossible to trace a line of evolution. What is of greater principal

¹ E. DRIOTON, *Pages d'Égyptologie*, 1958, p. 29.

² H. IDRIS BELL, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 1953, p. 2/3.

³ H. BREASTED, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, 1912.

⁴ J. SPIEGEL, *Phasen der ägyptischen Geistesgeschichte*, Saeculum, Band 1, 1950, Heft 1.

⁵ K. SETHE, *Urgeschichte und älteste Religion der Ägypter*, Abhand. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XVII band N° 4.

import, however, is the indisputable fact that throughout the ages the Egyptians remained faithful to the basic pattern of their religion. This 'conservatism' is most clearly evident in the texts and representations dating from the Ptolemaic age, when Egypt was already permeated by the Greek spirit. These texts, specifically, often prove to be detailed paraphrases of ideas which had already appeared in a very pregnant form in hoary antiquity. So the basic pattern was maintained. It is on it that our investigation must be focussed.

This does not imply that in all those centuries religious life was at a standstill. On the contrary. It is possible to discern the following interesting phenomena which prove that the Egyptians sought after new forms for their belief. Firstly, there gradually emerge certain trends such as (a) democratisation of religious life, by which the common man was accorded the immortality which originally was the pharao's prerogative, and (b) the increasing worship of sacred animals. Secondly one can distinguish remarkable episodes in which new thoughts stirred the mind, as for example during the period of reform under Amenophis IV-Akhnaton and the introduction of alien gods in the New Kingdom. Furthermore certain aspects of religion can be designated which deviate somewhat from the official norm and which assume a subordinate rank, such as popular piety with respect to exceptional gods like the dwarf Bes, the wordly wisdom of the well-known books of wisdom, cultural criticism of the so-called pseudo-prophetism and the voices which utter doubts about the meaning of life, as in the famous complaint of the life-weary man.

Similar variations on the main theme of Egyptian religion can also be heard in the data available on Hathor and Thoth. In the picture which the Thoth songs give of the personal relationship between the poets and their god, certain 'mythological' traits are missing which are universally considered essential to the being of this god.¹

The conclusion is obvious. If one takes account of the aforesaid special forms of religious life, one may justifiably draw on data from all periods of Egyptian history in order to compose a picture of Hathor and Thoth, for, despite peripheral alterations, the structure of the character of these gods continued to exist. Slight changes of a mythological or cultic nature can be disregarded. The basic pattern is constant. This is an important methodological insight.

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Thoth in den altägyptischen Hymnen*, Ex Orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren Oblata. 1972. I, p. 3 sq.

(5) From the sociological viewpoint, the religion of ancient Egypt was a folk religion. In this type of religion, the sacral and the profane communities coincide. The bearer of the supreme worldly authority, the pharaoh, was also the high priest in whose name all offers were made. Religion, art, ethics, science, the social order and the body politic are all mutually interwoven. Obviously in a folk religion, social and political events influence religious belief.

Now there are certain Egyptologists who link up the course of the history of the Egyptian religion very closely with events in the social and political spheres. The comments of K. SETHE on the earliest stages of the Egyptian religion strongly incline in this direction, and although SETHE's theses have been attacked, he has found followers. Such a standpoint fails to appreciate the autonomy of religion. The present study is based on the tenet that belief is *sui generis*. Even though one acknowledges that religion is often strongly influenced by non-religious factors, this does not imply affiliation with those who reduce religion to non-religious factors. A striking proof of the correctness of the tenet maintained here is to be found in the behaviour of the pharaohs. The most powerful of these rulers were undoubtedly hard-headed politicians and at times cynical imperialists. Nevertheless they conformed to the dictates of their religion, for example by celebrating, and obviously with dedication, the archaic rituals of the *šd*-festival.¹ Thus they acknowledged the independent value of their religion.

Upholding the autonomy of the Egyptian religion must not mean ignoring the problems arising from the close-knit relationship between the religion and the profane life of the community. These, however, are typical socio-religious questions. They are concerned with the form of the community that the religion creates and with the influence of mundane factors on the cult and concept of god. As applied to ancient Egypt, these questions are difficult to resolve, partly because our knowledge of the life of the religious community is slight. The present author is fully aware of this aspect of the study of the history of Egyptian religion, but does not treat of it here, since it is not essential to this investigation. The aim of this work is to arrive at a better understanding of the religious ideas incorporated in Hathor and Thoth. If the picture of these gods seems too much withdrawn from the earthly sphere, it should be remembered that the whole complex of social influences, political calculations and human passions prevalent in one

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals, Enactments of Religious Renewal*, 1967, p. 91 sq.

form or another in the structure of all forms of religion is taken for granted here.

(6) Man has often been called a barrel of contradictions. And yet every strong personality possesses a character with a homogeneous structure. Gods, too, have all sorts of qualities and engage in activities which hardly seem compatible with one another. Nevertheless the present author is convinced that the nature of the gods is not a random confection of qualities brought together by incidental circumstances and events, but that each godly figure conceals a meaningful and homogeneous structure. This conviction is based both on the insight gained during long years devoted to studying the history of religions and on the opinion that there is not a single believer who worships a deity who is nothing more than a peg on which to hang a number of haphazardly collected qualities. Naturally one must not ignore traits which do not fit into a given divine image and which therefore are problematical. Sometimes qualities alien to the essence of the godhead in question can be discerned which are ascribed to it by accident or by chance. Nevertheless this phenomenon should not make us forget that the real duty of the scholar of the history of religion is to demonstrate that the various facets of the divine image form an organic entity whose homogeneity is not marred by inevitable, somewhat inconsistent little traits.

Quite feasibly some readers might consider this section superfluous. The author believes that it is self-deception to refuse to acknowledge that every Egyptological study, even if of a purely factual, philological or archaeological nature, is based on certain presuppositions, even when the Egyptologist in question is not aware of them. A constituent of the task of scholarship, also of a strictly scientific study of the history of religion, is the necessity to focus the clear light of reflection on these presuppositions and to discount them in the analysis. The author does not claim that his explanations are complete and that they are the ultimate truth. Here, too, *non ut dicitur, sed ne taceretur*, obtains.

B. THE CHARACTER OF THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT EGYPT

It cannot be denied that the way in which an Egyptologist approaches and interprets a divine figure is strongly influenced by his over-all view of the nature of the ancient Egyptian religion. On the other hand the deities studied acquire a greater relief if they can be placed against the background of the general notion of Egyptian religion. It is there-

fore well worth while to devote a section to a description of certain salient features of this religion. A detailed and complete picture is not required in this context; reference may be made for such to the relevant literature.¹ Here it is sufficient to touch on the following traits which are essential to an interpretation of Hathor and Thoth.

(1) The religion of ancient Egypt belongs to the category of ancient religions. That means it is a dead religion. Its followers cannot be interrogated about the purport of concepts and customs alien and thus incomprehensible to us. In certain instances the words of a given text can be translated, but then one wonders what the author really intended. Often, to his sorrow, the Egyptologist must admit that only up to a certain point can he understand the ancient Egyptian, and this will also prove true in the treatment of Hathor and Thoth. The author does not flatter himself that he can hope to make these divine figures completely comprehensible. With respect to the meaning of certain symbols and passages in the texts in Egyptology one must, unfortunately, often utter a *non liquet*.

Perhaps we find it so difficult to fathom completely the ancient Egyptian religion, because it is an ancient religion, typologically vastly different from the founded religions that dominate the spiritual climate of the modern period. The latter type of religion was created either by the preaching of an apostle of God who had received God's message, or by a wise man like Buddha, who discovered a redeeming truth. This type of origin determines the structure of these religions and in particular their image of God: the deity is an invisible, spiritual being. The ancient religions were not founded, but sprang forth as it were, from the life of the common people. In the ancient religions a knowledge of God was not acquired through the medium of prophetic pronouncements, but through what M. ELIADE called a *hierophanie*², seen in nature as cosmos. This gave rise to a completely different image of God. Accordingly Hathor is a cow-goddess, a sky-goddess, a tree-goddess, and Thoth is a moon-god. This does not signify that they are the deification of certain natural phenomena. The old mythological explanation which derived the character of the gods totally from nature is no longer applied. Hathor and Thoth are independent, spiritual beings. Nevertheless their character and figurations are closely connected with a nature-substratum, as will appear in the course of this study.

¹ A Selected Bibliography is to be found at the end of C.J. BLEEKER, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, *Historia Religionum* I.

² M. ELIADE, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, 1949.

Since religion was orientated towards nature (the cosmos), thought in Egypt was greatly fascinated by the dualism of life and death. The contrast between the fertile Nile valley and the arid desert is still a striking feature of Egypt. The dividing line is sharply demarcated: where irrigation is possible, vegetation flourishes; where there is no water, the barren desert begins. The Egyptians reflected deeply on this antithesis.¹ They saw that life and death were mutual enemies. Still they were convinced that these two powers could be reconciled, namely in the divine life that overcomes death. Hence the Egyptian gods are beings who demonstrate their divinity by their resurrection and renewal after death. On this man places his hope. Little wonder that the purport of many rites and festivals is the desire for religious renewal.²

(2) The ancient Egyptian religion was the ferment of a homogeneous culture that differed radically from present-day chaotic civilisation insofar as the various cultural areas and religion did not form autonomous entities, but were interwoven. This does not imply that all of culture and of society lay in the grip of religion. Sometimes a false picture is given of the ancient — and also of the Eastern — world as being motivated entirely by religion. Obviously there were doubters and unbelievers in ancient days and also many deeds done without religious sanction or motivation. But that does not alter the fact that there was no division into cultural sectors and that religion laid its mark on the life of the individual and the community.

The divine norm for this complex was Ma-a-t, the order called into existence at the beginning of time by Re, the creator.³ Ma-a-t was a polyvalent notion. It signified truth, justice, order in society and was thus a concept. But Ma-a-t also assumed the shape of a goddess and then represented the cosmic order that fulfilled a dominant role. This order manifested itself in the regularity of the sunrise and sunset and in the mysterious happening in which life overcomes death and celebrates its resurrection.⁴

(3) The consequence of this attachment to Ma-a-t is a static image of the world. The Egyptian did not expect continuing changes in society and culture, nor a dynamic forwards rush to an uncertain

¹ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, 1949.

² C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals, Enactments of Religious Renewal*, 1967.

³ C.J. BLEEKER, *De betekenis van de Egyptische godin Ma-a-t*, 1929.

⁴ C.J. BLEEKER, *De overwinning op de dood*, 1942.

future, as does the present generation. He was convinced that the same order, Ma-a-t, which was established in primeval days would prevail to the end of time. Periods of chaos and social disruption did not count. Once they had passed by, the old order was established again. As ruler it was part of the pharaoh's duty to maintain Ma-a-t and to restore it where necessary. It was said of Amenophis III that his task was "to make Egypt flourish as in primeval days, through the plans of Ma-a-t".¹

As a result the Egyptian lacked historical consciousness. Historiography never really existed in ancient Egypt. The recording of annals was felt to be sufficient. The ancient religions, including that of Egypt, were not acquainted with the idea, so characteristic of Judaism and Christianity, that God has made himself known to his people in the course of history. Of course it is possible to quote texts which relate God's occupation with man and the community, as B. ALBREKTSON has done,² but these quotations should be read in their context. Then they lose their power to convince and fail to prove the presence of the idea of an historical revelation in ancient Egypt.

Those who are not convinced by this argumentation should consider two remarkable phenomena. The first is the fact that the Egyptian verbs are not verbal, but mainly nominal. They express qualities and manners of being. There is no concept of time : past, present, future. Aspects of the verb are given : they indicate actions which are complete and others which are unfinished.³ The second form expresses the present and the future tense; the first indicates the perfectum. The second phenomenon is the lack of an eschatology.⁴ The ancient Egyptian found his bearings from the mythic past, when the absolutely normative order was created. Attempts to discern an eschatological vision in certain texts rest on a weak foundation. A considerable skill in explanation is needed to distil this idea from a few scanty passages.⁵

This unhistorical view of life and world had, in two respects, remark-

¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 34.

² B. ALBREKTSON, *History and the Gods, An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and Israel*, 1967.

³ A. DE BUCK, *Egyptische Grammatica*, 1944; J. LECLANT, *Espace et temps, ordre et chaos dans L'Égypte pharaonique*, *Revue de Synthèse*, Juillet-Décembre, Tome XC, série générale, p. 239.

⁴ LECLANT, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

⁵ G. LANCZOWSKI, *Allägyptischer Prophetismus*, *Ägyptische Abhandlungen*, Band 4, 1960.

able consequences. In the first place faith in Ma-a-t filled the ancient Egyptian with optimism about the meaning of life. Pessimistic utterances are exceptional, although complaints about injustice experienced ring out loud and clear in certain well-known texts. On closer examination, however, they are the outcome of the conviction that justice is normative and as such must be respected. In the second place it has rightly been pointed out that what is typical is so very predominant in the royal texts and in the representation of the monarch that it ousts what is individual. The Pharaoh is always portrayed in songs and effigy as the ruler, the potentate, and very rarely — only in the Amarna period — as a personality with individual traits.¹ This artistic criterion is totally in accordance with a static vision of the world in which the permanent idea, the type, strongly prevails over continual change and individual peculiarities.

(4) It was stated above that the goddess Ma-a-t plays a dominating role in religion and in society. She is a mythical figure. This appellation calls forth certain comments on the nature and function of the myth in ancient Egypt. The subject is so important that it cannot be ignored. The introductory nature of this chapter, however, admits of only extreme austerity in the discussion of the many questions which arise here. Indeed there is no unanimity of opinion at all regarding a number of salient points such as, for example, the essence of the myth, the connection between myth and ritual, and the role played by the myth in ancient Egypt. These problems are dealt with at length in the relevant studies.²

The best choice of starting point for an attempt to obtain a clear insight into this matter is the thesis, once emphatically defended, that a 'mythical-ritual pattern' can be discerned in the culture and the religion of the Near East and of Egypt in ancient times.³ According to S. H. HOOKE, one of the leading protagonists of this thesis, this 'mythical-ritual pattern' is supposed to have found its expression in the order of the great annual festival. It is said to have the following structure : (a) the dramatic representation of the death and resurrection

¹ A. DE BUCK, *Het typische en het individuele bij de Egyptenaren*, 1929

² M. ELIADE, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Fr. HEILER, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion*, 1960; G. WIDENGREN, *Religionsphänomenologie*, 1969.

³ A.M. HOCART, *Kingship*, 1927; *Myth and Ritual*, edited by S.H. HOOKE, 1933; I. ENGNELL, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, 1943; Th.H. GASTER, *Thespis, Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, 1958; G. WIDENGREN, *Studies in the series. "King and Saviour"*.

of the god; (b) the recitation or symbolic representation of the resurrection of the god; (c) the ritual combat in which the triumph of the god over his enemies was depicted; (d) the sacred marriage, (e) the triumphal procession in which the king played the part of the god followed by a train of lesser gods or visiting deities.¹ Some adherents of this theory went so far as to entertain the belief that this 'pattern' governed all the culture of the ancient world. Understandably such a far-reaching conclusion provoked protest.² For that matter this thesis has met with so much opposition in the course of time that scholars writing later on this same subject were more critical and subtle in their pronouncements.³ Still one cannot steer clear of this question about the 'mythical-ritual pattern' and its application to ancient Egypt. Indeed the Egyptian culture displayed a striking homogeneity and a characteristic style. This can be indicative of a certain 'pattern', but does not mean it is an easy matter to describe what constitutes this 'pattern'.

The problem cannot be solved until clarity has been provided on two principal points, namely the essence of the myth and the relationship between myth and ritual.

There are a great number of definitions of myth. Anyone at all familiar with the relevant religious-historical material begins to doubt whether it is possible to find a definition of 'myth' that irrefutably holds good for such divergent forms of religion as, for example, in antiquity, the Greek world, the Veda literature and primitive culture. He is inclined to agree with the pronouncement of KERÉNYI that the myth, like a musical theme, can have many variations.⁴ G. S. KIRK goes even further in his observation that "There is no one definition of myth, no Platonic form of myth against which all actual instances can be measured. Myths differ enormously in their morphology and their social function."⁵ This is undoubtedly true. The most one can say is that the true myth, that is not every tale of the gods but the myth that carries religious authority, usually describes deeds performed by gods, demi-gods or divine forefathers in a mythical past, deeds that are normative for the community and the individual.⁶

¹ S.H. HOOKE, *The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East*, Myth and Ritual, 1933.

² H. FRANKFORT, *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions*, 1951.

³ *Myth, Ritual and Kingship*, edited by S.H. HOOKE, 1958; E.O. JAMES, *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*, 1958.

⁴ K. KERÉNYI, *Umgang mit Göttlichen*, 1955, p. 41.

⁵ G.S. KIRK, *Myth, its Meaning & Function in the Ancient & other Cultures*, 1970, p. 7.

⁶ R. PETTAZZONI, *The Truth of Myth*, *Essays on the History of Religions*, 1954.

As for Egypt one must admit, as said above, that the texts merely offer allusions to mythical ideas and not detailed myths. This circumstance led me to speak in a previous study of "the unmythical nature of the Egyptian gods",¹ a statement which has provoked opposition, but one I believe I can uphold.² In the case of Hathor and Thoth it will soon be made apparent that originally there was no myth of any significance linked up with Hathor, whereas Thoth plays an important role in the myth of Osiris and in that of the combat between Horus and Seth, though in origin he was an unmythical figure.

General opinion has also undergone change with respect to the relationship between myth and ritual. The bond is now thought to be looser than formerly. Evidently there are myths without ritual and vice versa. Furthermore it has become clear that there is no point in debating the priority of the myth or of the ritual. There is no general rule. Also there is now an increased appreciation of the sociological function of the myth and the ritual. Regarding this point, however, the author finds it difficult to agree with the conclusion of CL. KLUCKHOHN in his study on *Myths and Rituals: A General Theory* when he states: "In short, both myths and rituals are cultural products, part of the social heredity of a society."³ This observation is a half-truth. It does not do full justice to the specifically religious significance and function of the myth and ritual. KLUCKHOHN's one-sided sociological view of the subject is most clearly expressed in his postulation: "Both myth and ritual provide cultural solutions to problems which all human beings face."⁴ It may be true that the effect of myth and ritual really was that the ancient and primitive peoples learned to solve universal human problems. But the real meaning of the myth and ritual is different, namely the verbalisation of and the reaction to the confrontation with the Sacred.

As regards Egypt, the significance of myth and ritual and their relationship are most clearly discernible in the worship of the sun-god Re. The texts contain scattered allusions to a myth of creation that relates how, in the mythical pristine age, Re climbed the hill that rose above the primordial waters. From here he subdued the forces of chaos

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 19 sq.

² See f.i. these XVII of J.F. BORGHOUTS, *The Magical Texts of Papyrus*, Leiden I 348, 1971.

³ CLYDE KLUCKHOHN, *Myth and Ritual: A General Theory*, The Harvard Theological Review, Volume XXXV, 1942, p. 79.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 66.

and planned the world, in particular by introducing Ma-a-t, the cosmic order. By this deed Re assumed the kingship over the universe. From this myth can be derived the ideology of the king, the ritual of ascension to the throne and diverse stylistic motifs in art, such as the form of the pyramid as royal tomb. The pharaoh, who was held to be the son of the sun-god, was commissioned to follow the example of Re in his policy and to maintain Ma-a-t in his kingdom. His ascension to the throne took place on the morning after the day on which his predecessor died, in imitation of Re's climbing of the primordial hill in the dawn of time. The form of the pyramid imitates that of the primordial hill, which became the symbol of the resurrection of life from death. The pharaoh's interment in a tomb with this mythical significance enabled him to share the life of the deity.¹ In this complex of religious representations and customs, the significance of the myth and the ritual and their interrelationship is clearly manifest.

The inherent nature and form of the Egyptian myth can best be understood by comparison with the mythical thought of other ancient peoples, specifically those of Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome. It then appears that the Sumerians, especially the Babylonians, and the Greeks were peoples with a strong power of mythical imagination. Egypt has not produced any texts which are in even the slightest degree comparable with the impressive Babylonian story of creation or with the magnificent Gilgamesh epic on the one hand, or the mythical stories handed down by Hesiod and Homer on the other. On this point the ancient Egyptian religion has much in common with the ancient Roman. The latter religion likewise did not produce any myths in the literary form of a shorter or longer story. This is not proof of a lack of religious profundity, as is sometimes argued. It is merely an indication that the nucleus of the ancient Roman religion must be sought for elsewhere, for example in the awe felt for the numina, in the function of the concept *religio* and in a great number of rituals. As pointed out above, there are no myths in ancient Egypt in the form of a narrative. This is a trait entirely in keeping with the impression one gets on other grounds as well of the mentality of the ancient Egyptian. He was not lacking in religious intuition and sharpness of mythical apperception. However, he did not translate this mythical knowledge of truth into a dramatic story, rather into diverse rituals and symbols,

¹ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, 1949; A. DE BUCK, *De Egyptische voorstellingen betreffende de oerhevel*, 1922; H. FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, 1948.

sanctioned by mythical allusions, which played a role in the cult of the gods, the dead and in the life and conduct of the pharaoh.

(5) Like all other ancient religions, the Egyptian religion is a polytheism, though certain monotheistic tendencies can be discerned in it. The interesting and much-discussed question of the degree of importance of monotheism in Egypt cannot be dealt with at length here.¹ More important than H. JUNKER's thesis concerning a primeval god called "the Great" would seem to me to be the Aton theology of Amenophis IV-Akhnaton and the use made in the books of wisdom of the terms "god" and "the god", in the singular and without the mention of a name. These phenomena cannot be rated as monotheism, but rather as expressions of a henotheism in which one god is worshipped above all others. In its basic form the ancient Egyptian religion was emphatically a polytheism.

Polytheism always gives the impression of being a disorderly complex of important and insignificant gods. A first degree of order is created if one applies the distinction made by R.F. SPENCER in contemporary Eastern religion to the ancient Egyptian religion. He distinguished between "the Great Tradition" and "the Little Tradition",² In the former category he places the leading mythological and theological ideas. The second comprises the folk religion. In Egypt there similarly occur innumerable *dii minores* of merely local importance and usually quite colourless stature, so that they have little value for research in the history of religion. The gods of the "Great Tradition" should form the subject of religious-historical study.

Now the Egyptian scholar-priests brought some semblance of order into the confusion of gods by arranging them in certain systems. A famous group is the great ennead of Heliopolis comprising Atum, Shu, Tefnet, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys. Another customary group is the combination of a god, a goddess and a younger god as their son, such as the divine family of Thebes composed of Amon, Mut and Khonsu.

It would seem to me that such systems have only a formal value and do not disclose the inner structure of Egyptian polytheism. My belief is that a functional structure can be discovered in it. The use of the term 'functional' links up, in a sense, with the ideas of G. DUMÉZIL,

¹ H. JUNKER, *Pyramidenzeit*, 1949; J. ZANDEE, *De hymne aan Amon van Papyrus Leiden I 350*, 1948, p. 120.

² ROBERT F. SPENCER, *Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia*, 1971, p. 69 sq.

although I believe that the rigid tripartite scheme in which Dumézil places the culture and religion of the Indo-europeans is definitely not applicable to Egypt.¹ Nevertheless I do believe that the multiplicity of Egyptian gods falls into order when they are grouped according to function. Then it appears that a certain apportioning of roles has taken place among the gods by which practically all sectors of life and world are covered. H. FRANKFORT already led the way in discovering this functional arrangement when he stated that the chief notions of the Egyptian religion were Creation, Procreation, Resurrection.² I should like to extend and alter this set of concepts to Creation, Maintenance of the World Order, Procreation, Eternal Life. Obviously the ogdoad of Hermopolis and Re fulfil the function of Creation. Ma-a-t guards over the Maintenance of the World Order, a task undertaken by Ptah in a different sense. Min of Koptos is the typical god of Procreation. Osiris is the god who bestows Eternal Life on the dead. Like FRANKFORT, most scholars call him the god of Resurrection. It is true that he overcame death, but there never was a real Resurrection, because he became monarch of the realm of the dead.

When it comes to ranking Hathor and Thoth in this functional order, it is not difficult to find their places. In the character of Hathor the emphasis falls on Procreation, whilst Thoth is given the task of devoting himself to the Maintenance of the World Order.

(6) This characterisation of the Egyptian religion does not pretend to completeness. Much could be said about the part played by magic and mystery in the Egyptian cult. Since I have discussed these aspects in a study on 'Egyptian Festivals', I shall not touch on them here. The present sketch of the Egyptian belief has not been written for its own sake, but merely as a prerequisite for a good understanding of the two gods who constitute the main theme of this book. Hence its brevity. More detailed treatments should be consulted for a complete picture of the subject.³

There is still one peculiarity of the Egyptian religious sentiment which should be noted, namely the intimacy between man and his God. Herein lies a principal difference between the Egyptian religious notion and the Semitic conception of God. In all Semitic religions the godhead is a sovereign ruler who decides arbitrarily the fate of man. The

¹ G. DUMÉZIL, *L'idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens*, 1958.

² FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*.

³ See f.i. C.J. BLEEKER, *The religion of Ancient Egypt*, *Historia Religionum*, I, 1969.

Sumerian-Babylonian myth accordingly relates that man was created to serve the gods: that is the meaning of his existence. In the Old Testament Yahwe is the Lord, the holy, the living one and man is the servant, a sinful creature, dust of the earth. The Egyptians, on the contrary, felt an affiliation with their gods. With a certain degree of surprise one reads in the funerary texts how the deceased quite naturally identified himself with the high gods. This in no way implies that he imagines himself the equal of the gods, for other pronouncements express a deep respect, indeed an awe for the majesty of the deity. It expresses his expectation that after death he will partake of the divine life. That is why the Egyptian consorts very intimately at times with his gods.

The hymns devoted to Hathor and Thoth testify to this ambivalent attitude to the deity — with the emphasis on the idea of spiritual affinity.

On the one hand Hathor is said to be the 'Mistress of Fear', that she causes terror, and that "she despatches the gods of revenge against the enemies".¹ On the other hand profound trust in the goodness of the goddess is expressed in the prayer:

"I beseech thee to hear me, O Golden Majesty

(golden is an epithet of Hathor)

"I pray that thou wilt turn they heart to me." ²

Indeed the deceased was so bold as to identify himself with the great goddess Hathor in the triumphant words:

"I am Hathor

I have appeared as Hathor

who descends from the primeval age,

the Mistress of the universe,

who lives by truth." ³

Thoth is similarly honoured as a high god who outshines all other gods by virtue of his power and radiance. A poet praises Thoth in the following words:

"He is the most supreme of the gods

and of all the goddesses

for he commands the great ennead." ⁴

¹ H. JUNKER, "Poesie aus der Spätzeit," B, Z.Ä.S., 43, 1906.

² A. HERMANN, *Allägyptische Liebesdichtung*, 1959, p. 27/8.

³ C.T. IV, Spell 331.

⁴ B. TURAJEFF, "Zwei Hymnen an Thoth," Z.Ä.S., 33, 1895.

The sovereign majesty of Thoth in no way prevents one who has been treated unjustly from frankly approaching this god who upholds justice. This appears from a remarkable letter addressed to Thoth in which the writer, a priest in his service, complains of his scandalous treatment at the hands of a brother priest.¹ And what affection is expressed in the joyful exclamation :

“He is the lord of friendliness.”²

or in the laudation :

“God of exceptional goodness among the gods.”³

¹ J. DE HORRACK, “Sur un ostrakon du Musée du Louvre, Lettre à Monsieur le Docteur Lepsius,” *Z.Ä.S.* 6, 1868.

² TURAJEFF, *op. cit.*

³ TURAJEFF, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER TWO

HATHOR

A. TRADITIONAL MANIFESTATIONS

The first step along the laborious path leading to an understanding of the character of Hathor is to become acquainted with her traditional guises. The use of the plural here is not without reason, for Hathor is portrayed in various ways. These representations are so closely akin that they may be termed variations of the same notion. They are as follows:

(1) a female personage bearing as headgear two horns embracing a sun-disc and ornamented with the uraeus, the snake that protects gods and kings. Sometimes this Hathor figure also wears a cap in the shape of a vulture. She evidently borrowed this headgear from the goddess Mut, who appears as vulture or as female personage with the vulture as cap.

(2) a cow wearing the headgear of figure (1) above and also the *mnj.t* as necklace. The significance of this ornament is discussed in the passage dealing with the attributes of Hathor.

(3) a female visage with cow's ears and a wig — or else crowned with a sistrum, the musical instrument typical of Hathor — which serves as capital of a pillar. A striking feature of this representation is that here the goddess is seen full-face. This is an unusual manner of portrayal, for the Egyptian gods are normally portrayed in profile. The only other deity to share this exceptional position with Hathor is Bes, a rather strange popular god who later became more important. The unusual shape of Hathor's head is, of course, partly due to the fact that it forms the uppermost part of a pillar. The full-faced Hathor head also occurs on the handle of a bronze mirror.¹ The fact that this shape could be chosen undoubtedly accentuates the special position of the goddess in the Egyptian pantheon. What explanation can be given for this form of representation? It could be traced back to the pole or tree-trunk with the head of a bull, ox or cow which the Egyptians in prehistoric days are said to have erected above the graves of their tribal chieftains, a custom still observed today by certain tribes of Central Africa.² The

¹ *Egyptian Mythology*, 1965, p. 24.

² *A Guide to the Egyptian Collections in the British Museum*, 1919, p. 108.

purport of this custom is obscure, and how this grave distinction became a temple pillar remains an open question.

The wholly or partially theriomorphic shape of Hathor's effigy requires further explanation. One starting point could be the well-known fact that Egyptian gods are recognised, not from their facial traits or bodily stature, but from the emblems they bear, or from the head of their sacred animal placed on a human body. Admittedly certain deities such as Min have a purely anthropomorphic shape, but the majority of the gods have theriomorphic features. This peculiarity must be gone into in greater detail. H. FRANKFORT has pointed out that the relationship between a deity and his sacred animal is polyvalent.¹ Sometimes the deity appears completely as an animal, as when Horus is portrayed as a falcon, or Kheprer (the rising sun) as a beetle; sometimes the deity has an animal-head, such as the ibis-head of Thoth, the dog's head of Anubis; sometimes too the deity is accompanied by a sacred animal, such as Amon and the ram, or Ptah and the sacred bull Apis.

The question here is what interpretation must be given to the theriomorphic appearance of the Egyptian gods and hence of Hathor and Thoth. One opinion is that the completely theriomorphic image represents the earliest stage of the conception of God.² A later, more profound conception of God then created the anthropomorphic shape, and the animal-head of certain gods therefore is said to be a rudiment of an archaic representation of God. This opinion is evidently based on an evolutionistic theory which assumes that the Egyptians were only able to visualise their gods with human forms as their level of civilisation was gradually raised. No argumentation is needed to show that every evolutionistic theory about the course of any section of history is highly contestable. Apart from this consideration of principle, such an opinion is refuted by the facts. There are cases of very ancient deities, such as Min who is mentioned above, who have always, right from the beginning, been portrayed anthropomorphically. Besides, the Egyptian gods never developed individual features, which is what one would expect according to the contested theory.

The explanation for the phenomenon noted above must be sought

¹ H. FRANKFORT, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, p. 8 sq.

² G. JÉQUIER, *Considérations sur les religions égyptiennes*, 1949, p. 14 sq.; K. SETHE, *Urgeschichte und älteste Religion der Ägypter* (Abh. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XVIII Band, N° 4).

elsewhere, to be specific in the appreciation felt for animals all over the world amongst peoples who live in close contact with the animal world, both in the ancient days and among primitives and many Eastern peoples.¹ Man and animal were continually coming into contact with each other, so man's attitude towards the animal was ambivalent, alternating between affection, respect and fear. Ancient man depended for his sustenance on certain animals, such as the cow, and this explains his attachment to these animals. On the other hand he stood in great awe of the agility and strength of other animals. As an example of the latter quality might be mentioned the crocodile, which was elevated to a deity in Egypt. H. FRANKFORT also points out that the animal never seems to grow older, since new examples of each sort keep on appearing, whereas the mortality of man is painfully obvious.² The animal is a fascinating creature because of its nature and habits, which give the impression that it belongs to an entirely different order. This explains why it was possible to conceive of the animal as a manifestation of the deity. Indeed, many peoples have chosen the theriomorphic shape as an expression of the essential difference between god and man.

It is in the light of this conception of the animal that the aforesaid alternating relationship between the Egyptian gods and the sacred animals should be seen. The hybrid godly figure of a human body with the head of an animal should be taken as an ideogram for the thought that this deity, who differs in principle from man because of his essence, can appear in the animal in question. This conception is the presupposition of a good understanding of Hathor as cow-goddess, a figuration shortly to be dealt with.

B. HATHOR'S NAME

On reading the title of this section one might ask the famous question in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: "What's in a name?" Did not Goethe have Faust say: "Name ist Schall und Rauch"? Indeed, in the world of today a name is of slight value. Usually it is a fortuitous denomination. The people of old had different ideas about it. To their mind a name expressed the essence of its bearer. Knowledge of a name

¹ G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, 1933; FR. HEILER, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion*, 1961.

² FRANKFORT, *op. cit.*

brought with it power over the one who bore it. ¹ That is why it is useful to question the meaning of Hathor's name.

The Greeks called the goddess *'Aθυρ* and identified her with Aphrodite. ² This identification cannot be accidental. It suggests that Hathor was the patroness of love and procreative life. In his treatise *Περὶ Ἰσιδος καὶ Ὀσιριδος* PLUTARCH adds that Isis, who later was often associated and even identified with Hathor, was called in turn Mut, Athyri and Methyer. ³ Here Mut, a name he rightly translates as mother, certainly signifies the famous Theban goddess of that name. Methyer is the Greek form of *Mḥt wr.t*, the great flood, the primordial water, a goddess who is often represented as a cow ⁴ and, as we shall see, has a special relationship with Hathor. PLUTARCH explains the name Athyri as follows: *σημαίνουσι* (i.e. the Egyptians) ... *τῷ δὲ δευτέρῳ οἶκον Ὠρου κόσμιον, ὥς καὶ Πλάτων χώραν γένεσεως καὶ δεξαμενὴν*. According to this explanation, the name Athyri means the cosmic house of Horus and figuratively the place of the beginning of things. Athyri, of course, means Hathor.

In Egyptian Hathor is called *Ht-Hr*, usually translated as the house of Horus. The hieroglyphic rendering of the name is the sign for a large house or a temple containing a falcon, the bird of Horus. House is sometimes taken to be a poetic figure of speech for the womb. ⁵ The Horus represented here by a falcon is undoubtedly the sky- and sun-god and not Horus the child of Osiris and Isis. The two gods are linked in an almost inextricable way, but typologically are easily distinguishable. Horus the skygod is the martial figure who combats his enemies; Horus the child of Osiris and Isis is the faithful son who stands up for his father and defends his rights. ⁶ By virtue of her name and the intimate relationship with Horus inherent in it, Hathor is characterised as a sky-goddess. In the section on Hathor as sky-goddess, the precise implication of her name will have to be discussed.

From time immemorial, and particularly in later ages, Hathor was

¹ H.W. OBBINK, *De magische betekenis van de naam, inzonderheid in het oude Egypte*; G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Phänomenologie der Religion, Sachregister*.

² W.B. 3:5; H. BONNET, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, 1952, p. 277 sq.

³ Caput 56.

⁴ C.J. BLEEKER, *The Egyptian Goddess Neith*, Festschrift G. SCHOLEM, 1968.

⁵ K. SETHE, *Urgeschichte und älteste Religion der Ägypter*, Abh. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XVIII, Band 4, p. 67.

⁶ C.J. BLEEKER, *Die Geburt eines Gottes, Eine Studie über den ägyptischen Gott Min und sein Fest*, 1956, p. 15 sq.

surnamed "the Gold", "the Golden One" (*nb*).¹ Nowhere is an explanation of this epitheton given. There are two possible reasons for giving Hathor these titles. Gold, the noblest of metals, prompts the thought of immortality, eternity. *Nb* is therefore an apt qualification for a goddess whose imposing personality and inexhaustible strenght give the impression that she defies temporariness and transience. Perhaps Hathor was given this epithet because gold glitters and because Hathor is described as a radiant figure in the texts. Thus a hymn speaks of "the epiphany of her beauty."² It is said of the deceased "thou shinest like Hathor."³ Elsewhere the following picture is drawn of the dazzling beauty of Hathor: 'The beautiful, the lovely one, who stands at the head of the 'House of the Beautiful'; the gods turn their heads away in order to see her (better)'.⁴

This apposition induced G. JÉQUIER to compose a subtle and complicated theory which gives quite a different explanation of *nb*.⁵ He argues from the fact that Ombos, the city situated in the vicinity of Dendera, the centre of the Hathor worship, is called *Nbj.t* and that the city god, who is identified with Seth, is called *Nbj.tj*. JÉQUIER's assumption is that the inhabitants of Ombos originally worshipped a god and goddess called *Nbj.tj* and *Nb* or *Nb.t*. After a series of entanglements the goddess is supposed to have gone northwards to Dendera with some of the inhabitants of Ombos, and to have assumed the name Hathor. So Hathor is said to have acquired her epithet *nb*. This theory is based on a number of hypotheses and hence does not seem very plausible. The meaning of *nb* assumed above is preferable, because it is the most obvious one.

All sorts of epithets are ascribed to Hathor in the inscriptions of the temple of Dendera, which are more eloquent than the older texts in which the goddess is mentioned. These flowery appellations merit attention in this context since they, like her name, are descriptions of the essence of Hathor. They provide excellent means for a first acquaintanceship with the goddess. The following are a few examples. Hathor is

¹ W.B. 2: 239.

² H.E. WINLOCK, "The eleventh Egyptian dynasty," *JNES* 2, 1943, p. 258 sq., Taf. 36: stela of king Wah-Anch Antef II; H. HERMANN, *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung*, 1959, p. 25/6.

³ C.T. I, Spell 61, 261 b.

⁴ H. JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende*, Kaiserliche Ak. d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften, 59, Band, 1, 2 Abhandlung, 1917, p. 89.

⁵ G. JÉQUIER, *Considérations sur les religions égyptiennes*, 1946, 185 sq.

called "mistress of the viands, possessor of abundance" ¹; she is named "mistress of the sky, queen of the stars, ruler over Sirius, the great, who makes *H'pj* (the Nile) come" ²; she is praised as "controller of the mountains, the eminent, possessor of precious stones", ³ she is entitled "eye of Re, ruler of the sky, queen of the gods, possessor of Ma-a-t;" ⁴ it is said of her that she is "the primeval goddess... the mistress of the book... that which comes from her mouth at once takes place." ⁵ These honorary titles will be brought into greater relief in a next section, which deals with the figurations of Hathor.

C. THE PRIMEVAL GODDESS

Interesting data prove that Hathor is a primeval goddess. The Egyptians knew her from the beginning of their history, and indeed already in prehistoric times she was worshipped. She is therefore a typically Egyptian goddess.

Hathor is often called a mother-goddess. The accuracy of this appellation must be investigated later. In any case this term provides a reason for considering a series of prehistoric Egyptian female effigies. They represent a naked female characterised as "great-breasted" and "broad-hipped". They portray a mother figure and were evidently meant to promote fertility. G. D. HORNBLOWER says of these effigies: "These mysterious instruments of family or tribal prosperity fraught with marvel and awe, were deeply venerated and were on the way to becoming what we call deities." ⁶ Considered critically, this positive statement is nothing more than a hypothetical interpretation. Nevertheless it becomes a degree more probable through data known from elsewhere. The Egyptian images belong to a widely scattered category of prehistoric female effigies which have been found in many countries of Europe and Asia. At times they represent a motherly figure, at others a virgin. Evidently they are figurations of the mystery of woman, who can give birth to new life. ⁷ There are grounds for looking upon these

¹ A. MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, 1875, I 60 a.

² *Op. cit.* I 65 a.

³ *Op. cit.* I 67 a.

⁴ *Op. cit.* 52.

⁵ *Op. cit.* II 63 a.

⁶ G.D. HORNBLOWER, "Predynastic Figures of Women and their Successors," *JEA*, Vol. XV, 1929, p. 31.

⁷ C.J. BLEEKER, *De moedergodin in de oudheid*, 1960.

effigies as prefigurations of the later, well-known great goddess, who is virgin mother, a symbolism which designates that, in her godliness, she can procreate new life spontaneously, without a partner. HORN-BLOWER assumes that the Egyptian images were venerated. That is uncertain. Often such images are so very small that they seem more like magical amulets. Let us be circumspect and say with HORN-BLOWER that they were "on the way of becoming what we call deities."

These effigies may be said to form the background to the Hathor figure. The link-up with the goddess becomes visible in the case of a category of female effigies with a hairstyle reminiscent of Hathor's traditional wig. Graves dating from the later stage of the prehistoric era have also yielded amulets with the head of a cow which evidently represent Hathor.¹ Before scrutinizing the prehistoric representations of Hathor, it should be mentioned that in later times the simple image of the motherly figure did not entirely disappear, even though Hathor predominated. Images of females with children have also been found, and their purpose was obviously to promote the blessing of children. In addition there are urns with breasts and with arms supporting the breasts. They resemble the prehistoric images of the same type. Nor did the virgin type disappear in later times.²

From these data it may be concluded that Hathor derives from a primeval female figure who was both mother and virgin. The task of this godly figure was to promote fertility. In particular the ancients expected her to fulfil one of their dearest wishes, to have children. Moreover great value was attached to the possession of heirs in Egypt, since the cult of the dead could only be safeguarded if there was a son to take on this obligation.

As for Hathor, the symptoms of her presence date from as early as the period of the first dynasty. Testimony of this is provided by the following. Of great interest is a little ivory engraving dating from the beginning of the first dynasty and taken from a grave at Abu-Roash which represents the head of Hathor, full-face and bearing cowhorns. This Hathor image is flanked by the mysterious hieroglyph which represents the god Min.³ Unfortunately this sign has not yet been

¹ HORN-BLOWER, *op. cit.* p. 37; Compare : W.M. FLINDERS PETRIE, *Royal Tombs of the earliest Dynasties*, 1900, I, pl. 27, 71.

² *Op. cit.* p. 39 sq.

³ *Phoenix*, Bulletin, uitgegeven door het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex Oriente Lux. Dec. 1958, p. 45, XV; Compare : PETRIE, *Royal Tombs*, I, 27, 71; 11, 13.

completely deciphered, although there are grounds for assuming that it is a fertility symbol. ¹ The relationship between Hathor and Min therefore dates from time immemorial. Since Min is a god of vegetation, his presence alongside of Hathor determines the sphere in which this goddess belongs. Another aspect of her being emerges from the image on a porphyry urn from Hierakonpolis. It has the well-known Hathor head with stars on the tips of the horns, on the forehead and on the tips of the ears. ² This image testifies to Hathor's relationship with the firmament, especially the starry sky which is discussed below. Hathor is also known from royal tombs. An ivory engraving of a recumbent cow, which evidently represents Hathor, bears the words "Hathor in the marshes of King Zer's city of Dep (Buto)." ³ This little archaic legend is also illustrated in portraits, for example in vignettes in the Book of the Dead showing Hathor in the shape of a cow emerging from a clump of papyrus in the marshy Delta region. ⁴ Finally there is the famous palette of King Narmer with on its top and on the belt of the pharaoh cow-heads which could be interpreted as Hathor-heads. ⁵

With regard to the texts, we find the first mention of Hathor on what is known as the stone of Palermo, which contains the annals of the earliest dynasties. In these brief state communications we read that, under King Userkaf, Hathor was present in the sun temple, possessed land in the north and the south and received offers. In the annals of Pharaoh Neferirkere mention is made of an altar belonging to the goddess. Moreover a procession of Ihy, the later so famous son of Hathor, led to the sanctuary of the goddess. Here Hathor already bears the customary title of 'mistress of the sycomore'. ⁶

D. FIGURATIONS OF HATHOR

Hathor is such a fascinating figure because she appears in different guises. She also has various attributes which tell us something about

¹ BLEEKER, *Min*, p. 41 sq.

² A. SCHARFF, *Grundzüge der ägyptischen Vorgeschichte*, Morgenland XL, 13.

³ Petrie, *Royal Tombs*, I, XXVI, 71; II, V, 1.

⁴ See f.i. E. NAVILLE, *Das ägyptische Tottenbuch der XVIII bis XX Dynastie*, I pl. CCXII.

⁵ H. FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 172.

⁶ H. SCHAEFER, *Ein Bruchstück altägyptischer Königsannalen*, Anhang zu Abh. der kön. preuss. Ak. der Wiss. 1902.

her being. In addition she is connected with a number of gods and goddesses, and since this cannot be arbitrary, it helps determine her character. Another important feature is her relationship with the pharaoh. Finally her cult and the festivals celebrated in her honour provide important information about her nature. All this material must be studied in order to understand Hathor and to obtain an insight into the structure of her being. Guided by the concept of the homogeneity of the Egyptian deities set forth in section I A 6, I should like to trace the idea that underlies the forms in which Hathor appears and that makes a meaningful totality out of the apparently dissimilar expressions of the goddess.

To begin with there follows a treatment of her figurations.

a) *The cow-goddess*

It has already appeared from the traditional forms of her appearance discussed in section II A that Hathor is a cow-goddess. To understand the meaning of this representation, one must first know what value the Egyptian attached to the cow. It is common knowledge that owners of livestock everywhere and at all times have been and still are attached to their animals and especially their cows. The possession of a healthy herd has always been a matter of pride. In this way the cow became a symbol of prosperity and even of vitality and immortal life. The cow undoubtedly held this status in ancient Egypt too. HERODOTUS relates that in his time cows were greatly venerated in Egypt.¹ Although his statement relates to a later stage in Egyptian religion which was characterised by an excessive cult of animals, it may be assumed that in prior ages the cow was also held to be sacred.

Secondly it should be remembered that, as cow-goddess, Hathor does not represent the peaceful domesticated animal, but the wild cow that lived in the originally marshy region of the Delta. This magnificent, semi-mysterious cow became a divine being, the symbol of fertile, abundant life. It is even the cow which comes from the other world. In the vignettes of the Book of the Dead mentioned in Section II C, Hathor is seen as a cow emerging from a mountain. On this mountain stands the sign of the West, the realm of the dead.² In the Coffin texts mention is made of the cave of Hathor which opens up, apparently for

¹ Her. II 41.

² NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch* I, pl. CCXII.

the epiphany of the goddess.¹ The cultic actualisation of this mythic idea can be found in the Hathor shrine of the XIth Dynasty temple at Deir-el-Bahri. There an effigy of Hathor as cow stands in an artificial cave.² This representation will be brought into greater relief when the figurations of Hathor as sky-goddess, in particular as goddess of the nocturnal sky and as goddess of death, are discussed. Hathor as cow-goddess is a mysterious being, the bearer of life from a higher order.

Now Hathor is not the only cow-goddess, for others have also taken on this shape. The most important of these are Nut and *Mḥt wr.t*.

Nut, the typical sky-goddess, is sometimes portrayed as a cow. In a famous drawing she is arched as a gigantic sky-cow above the earth, and the sun-god sails across her back in his ship.³ This is the illustration belonging to the story which is called, depending on its interpretation, the myth of the destruction, or of the saving of the human race. This story, which gives a martial picture of Hathor, is dealt with below.

Mḥt wr.t, the great flood, rose up out of the primeval waters according to a later myth.⁴ She then performed several deeds of creation, the decisive one of which was the mysterious birth of the sun-god. Thereafter *Mḥt wr.t* placed the sun-god between her horns. Earlier texts also mention the birth of Re out of *Mḥt wr.t*.⁵

Mḥt wr.t is a primeval goddess and occurs already in the pyramid texts, in which she is localised in the sky.⁶ The same is related in Spell 17: 13, 14 of the Book of the Dead. In these texts *Mḥt wr.t* is the sky-flood. Here we have a phenomenon which can often be discerned in ancient Egypt: a connection between cosmogony and cosmography, in other words the primeval ocean which brought forth divine life is represented in the actual world by the water thought to be in the sky and in the underworld. In both cases the waters take on the shape of a cow. It is also worth noting that in cosmography *Mḥt wr.t* apparently was held to be the nocturnal sky: reference is made to "the darkness in

¹ BiOr. XV No 5. Sept. 1958: article of E. DRIOTON.

² E. NAVILLE, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, 1907; CHR. DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT, Ch. KUENTZ, *Le petit temple d'Abou Simbel*, 1968.

³ M.E. LEFÉBURE, *Le tombeau de Sêti I*, 1886, IV, XV sq.

⁴ C.J. BLEEKER, *The Egyptian Goddess Neith*, p. 52; S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna, aux derniers siècles du paganisme*, 1962, p. 245.; See also: G. MICHAILIDIS, *Contribution à l'Étude de la grande déesse en Égypte*. Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte, Tome XXXVI, Fasc 1, p. 409 sq.

⁵ Urk. V: 36-38; Naville, *Todtenbuch*, 17: 34/35.

⁶ Pyr. 289, 508, 1031/2.

the night which is in *Mḥt wr.t*.”¹ Out of these waters of the nocturnal sky or the realm of the dead the sun-god is born each day.

It appears that Hathor and *Mḥt wr.t* are affiliated; and so closely that *Mḥt wr.t* is identified with Hathor. In Spell 186 of the Book of the Dead we read: “Veneration of Hathor, the mistress of the West; kissing the ground (pay respectful homage) before *Mḥt wr.t*.”² *Mḥt wr.t* is also called the *wḏꜣt-eye*, that is the restored, sound eye of Re.³ The significance of this *wḏꜣt-eye* will be elucidated in the chapter on Thoth. Hathor also bears the title “eye of Re”, as mentioned above at the end of Section I B. In the present context it is sufficient to note this fact. It will be discussed at greater length in the section on Hathor as suneye.

Involuntarily the question arises as to which goddess can claim to have the original cow-form. There are grounds for awarding priority to Hathor. Ideologically Nut is linked with her partner, the earth-god Geb, both of whom are depicted in anthropomorphical form. One famous representations shows Nut bending over a prostrate Geb. This situation came about when Shu, the god of air, separated the two deities who were united in love. Nut therefore belongs to a family of gods that is systematised in the ennead of Heliopolis. Her cow figuration is apparently secondary.

In the case of *Mḥt wr.t* one might wonder whether her cow figuration is not older than that of Hathor. The presupposition underlying this view is that Hathor and *Mḥt wr.t*, who were later identified as we have seen above, were originally independent figures, though K. Sethe apparently does not think so.⁴ An argument in favour of the priority of *Mḥt wr.t* could be that already in the pyramid texts the name of *Mḥt wr.t* has the determinative of the cow.⁵ Nevertheless *Mḥt wr.t*

¹ E.A.W. BUDGE, *The Book of the Dead*, 1951, 124 : 17; W.B. KRISTENSEN. *Het leven uit de dood*, 1949, p. 23.

² NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, I pl. CCXII.

³ NAVILLE, *op. cit.* 17:34/5.

⁴ In the pyramid-texts the cow of heaven is sometimes called *Šmꜣ wr.t* or *Hsꜣt*. The sungod is born from these mythological beings. See : pyr. 289, 388, 508, 729, 809, 1029 and K. SETHE, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, I p. 337, II p. 121, 358, III p. 335, IV p. 43, V p. 35, 310; unfortunately the succinct language of the pyramid-texts prevents the egyptologist from forming a clear picture of the nature and the relation of these different cows of heaven. In my opinion there is no distinct connection with Hathor.

⁵ Pyr. 289 c.

has remained a purely mythological figure. She never created her own cult, unlike Hathor who was worshipped in many places in Egypt and had an imposing temple built in her honour at Dendera. A striking example of the worship of Hathor as cow can be found in her sanctuary in the XIth Dynasty temple at Deir el-Bahri.¹ There the goddess is depicted as a cow with a strangely patterned skin. Evidently cows with skins marked in this way were looked upon as incarnations of Hathor. Beautiful representations of the Hathor cow can also be admired in the sanctuary of the goddess in the great temple at Deir el-Bahri.² The sun-disc between the horns of the Hathor cow could feasibly have been inspired by the mythical conception of *Mḥt wr.t* who places the new-born sun-god between the horns, though as said above it is only in a later text that this idea is clearly expressed. In any case the cow figuration of *Mḥt wr.t* is not a marked one. That of Hathor is at least as old and evidently appealed more strongly to the religious imagination of the Egyptians, for Hathor eclipsed *Mḥt wr.t* completely.

It is not surprising that in certain temples cows were kept that were consecrated to Hathor. Four instances might be mentioned.³ At Momemphis in the south-west of the Delta there was a sacred cow which bore the name *Šḥ3.t Hr*, "she who remembers Horus." This is a representative of the cow-goddess who suckled Horus. In Aphroditopolis located on the plateau of the Fayum a white cow was worshipped. At Kusae to the north of Assiut, the cows consecrated to Hathor were called *tn.t.t.*⁴ Similarly there were sacred cows at Dendera, for centuries the centre of the Hathor cult.

It would be wrong to suppress the fact that the problem of the origin and the cow figuration of Hathor is more complicated than appears from the above remarks. The cow as religious symbol was very widespread in Egypt and fulfilled various functions. Two instances might be given. Firstly the cow occurs in the sign of diverse nomes, as in the case of the nomes of which the capitals were Dendera, Aphroditopolis (Debu), Kusae, Aphroditopolis (Tep-ah) in Upper Egypt and in the nome which had Apis as its capital in Lower Egypt.⁵ Secondly the

¹ E. NAVILLE, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, Part I. Chapter VI.

² E. NAVILLE, *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari, 1895-1908*, IV pl. LXXXVII, LXXXVIII, LXXXIX, XC, XCI, XCIV, XCVI, CIV, CV.

³ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 402 sq. : Kuh.

⁴ W.B. 5 : 376 ; P.M. FRASER, "A Temple of Hathor at Kusae," *JEA* 42, 1956, p. 97 sq.

⁵ TH. HOPFNER, *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter*, 1914, p. 8,9.

cow played a role in the funerary cult. A few examples. In the vignettes of the various editions of Spell 148 of the Book of the Dead, a number of cows and a bull are depicted that are invoked to provide nourishment for the deceased.¹ And there are other instances in which cows assist the dead.² There are beds in the shape of a cow on which the bier of the dead is placed.³ This custom is probably inspired by the concept of the sky-goddess Nut who, as cow, was expected to receive the deceased within her body and let him be born again, just like the sun-god. Herodotus relates that Pharaoh Menkaure (Mycerinos), deeply grieved by the loss of his daughter and only child, had her interred in a wooden image in the shape of a cow, apparently for the reason just mentioned.⁴ All these cows are evidently divine beings that have become interrelated in the religious symbolism.

In order to fathom the representation of Hathor as cow-goddess, account must be taken of a habit of thought of the Egyptians which we shall come across time and again, namely their inclination and ability to combine gods and numina in such a way that their beings seem to coincide wholly or in part. This identification in no way precludes typological independence. Thus Hathor as a cow-goddess is linked with Nut, *Mḥt wr.t* and later Isis, as well as with all sacred cows. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that in this quality Hathor possesses original significance. In any case she was the cow-goddess par excellence and that in ages long past.

Finally it is useful to note that this first section on a Hathor figuration confirms the observations made in Section IB 4 about the function of the myth. Not one single myth in narrative form is connected with Hathor the cow-goddess. It is a symbolic concept that gives expression to a mythical idea, namely Hathor as personification of the divine life that procreates and nourishes.

b) *The tree-goddess*

Psalm I compares the believer with a green tree :

And he shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water,
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season,
his leaf shall not wither;
and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, I. pl. CLXVII.

² BONNET, *op. cit.*, *ibidem*.

³ *Idem*.

⁴ Her. II 129.

It is a delight for the eye to behold a vigorous tree with luxuriant foliage. The psalmist uses this picture when he wishes to portray one who is truly devote.

Even in ancient days there were no vast forests in Egypt. It had to make do with modest-sized groves. Today trees are still scarce in the Nile Valley, but all the more an embellishment to the landscape for that. Understandably trees have not only been precious since time long past in Egypt, but from a religious viewpoint have also been considered sacred. A sturdy tree with the power of growth, such as the one that inspired the poet to his abovementioned comparison, was a manifestation of divine, creative life in the eyes of the ancients. Hathor as tree-goddess should follow after Hathor as cow-goddess. These are the vegetative and animal hierophany of this goddess and as such are related aspects of her being.

The tree cult dates from earliest times and was widespread among the peoples of the ancient world.¹ In ancient Egypt, too, trees were considered sacred, especially the sycomore and the acacia.² The religious connotation of the tree is at once apparent from a number of nome emblems: the 13th, 14th, 20th, and 21st nomes of Upper Egypt had a tree in their coat of arms.³ All things considered, these tree signs imply that in the nomes mentioned the people lived in the shadow of the holy tree, as it were, and committed themselves to the keeping of the tree-goddess who dwelled in it. In later times almost every nome had a sacred grove.

It is not surprising that the tree plays a role in mythology. The texts mention two trees, between which the sun-god rises.⁴ They are reminiscent of the tree of life in the Biblical story of paradise.⁵ Well-known too is the *išd* tree in which the *bnw*-bird, the phoenix, perches and beside which Re is portrayed in the shape of a tom-cat. Spell 17 of the Book of the Dead relates how Re as tom-cat split the *išd*-tree in the night of

¹ H. BERGEMA, *De Boom des levens in schrift en historie*, 1938; E.O. JAMES, *The tree of Life, an archaeological Study*, 1966.

² BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 82 sq. Baumkult; MARIE-LOUISE BUHL, "The goddess of the Egyptian tree cult," *JNES*, Vol. VI, 1947.

³ H. KEES, *Der Götterglaube im alten Aegypten*, 1941, p. 85.

⁴ A. DE BUOK, *Egyptische godsdienst* (G. VAN DER LEEUW-C.J. BLEEKER, *De godsdiensten der wereld*, 1956) I, p. 30/1.

⁵ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Een of twee bomen in het paradijsverhaal? Symbool en werkelijkheid*, 1962.

the combat with his enemies.¹ Evidently this deed made the sunrise possible. Later the flowers of this tree were called "flowers of life."²

It is but a short step from the sacred tree to the tree-goddess. The tree was thought to be inspired, that is inhabited by a divine spirit or goddess. The tree-goddess is not an uncommon figure in ancient Egypt. Extant representations portray the upper part of a female figure emerging from a tree.

Hathor is not the only tree-goddess. She must share this honour with other goddesses, particularly Nut, Isis and Saosis. Nut, goddess of the sky, became goddess of the dead in later times.³ One way in which she performs this function is as tree-goddess: she leans forward from a tree and gives the deceased food and drink.⁴ The personification of Nut as tree-goddess is certainly not original, nor is that of Isis which is analogous to it. Saosis or Jusas, a goddess who was identified with Hathor, was associated with the acacia. In her sanctuary to the north of the temple of Re, this tree stood on what was called the High Sand, that is the reproduction of the primordial hill, at Heliopolis.⁵ This acacia was a remarkable tree, for it is stated that in it "death and life are enclosed."⁶ This characterisation is a typically Egyptian figure of speech for divine life that has the power of rising from death and consequently encompasses life and death.⁷ The tree was looked upon as the revelation of divine life. For the rest Saosis is a numen of little colour and subordinate importance.

It is evident that Hathor is also a dominating personage as tree-goddess. She appears to have absorbed in her person all sorts of nameless tree-goddesses. She eclipsed Nut, Isis and Saosis. She became the tree-goddess par excellence. She manifests herself in one tree in particular, the sycamore. From time immemorial she bears the title *nb.t nh.t*, mistress of the sycamore.⁸ The Coffin Texts mention a sacred grove belonging to Hathor which consisted of sycomores.⁹ As early as the

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 17: 54-56.

² BUHL, *op. cit.*

³ A. RUSCH, *Die Entwicklung der Himmelsgöttin Nut zu einer Totengottheit*, Mitt. d. Vorasiat.-äg. Ges. 27, 1.

⁴ See f.i. vignette to spell LIX of E.A. WALLIS BUDGE, *The Book of the Dead*, 1951.

⁵ BUHL, *op. cit.*; BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 356/7: Jusas.

⁶ BUHL, *op. cit.*

⁷ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*.

⁸ W.B. 2: 282 and Belegstellen.

⁹ A. DE BUCK, "The Egyptian Coffintexts VI", article of E. DRIOTON, *BiOr* XV, N° 5 Sept. 1958, p. 187 sq.

Pyramid Texts the sycomore played a mythical role : it is a tall tree on the eastern horizon in which the gods are seated, or under which are the chthonic gods. ¹ Hathor bears the title *nb.t nh.t* in particular as patroness of a sanctuary to the north of the wall of Memphis and in the New Kingdom as goddess of a temple to the south of this same city. ² Furthermore there was a cult of Hathor as *nb.t nh.t* in the region of the pyramids of Gizeh. Here Hathor is supposed to have taken possession of a very old and venerable sycomore. ³

Strangely enough the sycomore is also portrayed as a bare tree. On a stele at Florence there is a leafless tree standing in a receptacle with water. Hathor can be seen in this tree in human form with the head of a cow. ⁴ Pyr. 1485 mentions a sycomore burnt at the edges and reduced to charcoal within. Hence a dead tree. In contrast to the leafy sycomore which provides shadow and represents life, the bare tree is evidently the emblem of death. The two moments of absolute life, life and death, which are united in the aforesaid sycomore wherein "death and life are enclosed", are here separated into the leafy and the bare tree.

In addition to the conception that Hathor manifests herself in the tree, we also encounter the idea that she is sitting under her sycomore, ⁵ and there are also representations of her in this position. ⁶ In the Book of the Dead the deceased prides himself on the fact that he is seated in the shadow of Hathor's sycomore and may enjoy his meals there. ⁷ In a land such as Egypt, where the sun can shine mercilessly, the tree provides a refreshing shadow that is beyond estimation. And that not only during life, but after death as well. The bestower of this benefaction is the tree-goddess Hathor, who reveals her power of renewal in the tree.

¹ Pyr. 699, 916, 1485.

² MAJ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *The God Ptah*, 1946, p. 191, 299; SCHAFIK ALLAM, *Beiträge zum Hathorkult* (bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches), 1963, p. 103 sq.

³ R. MOFTAH, "Die uralte Sykomore und andere Erscheinungen der Hathor", *Z.Ä.S.* 92 Band, erstes Heft, 1965, p. 40 sq.

⁴ LANZONE, *Dizionario TAV* 322 :1.

⁵ ALLAM, *op. cit.* p. 105.

⁶ BUDGE, *Book of the Dead*, p. 231.

⁷ Spell 52 :2; 68 : 10; 82 : 5/6. See translations of Budge and of TH.G. ALLAM, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead, Documents in the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago*, 1960.

c) *A mother-goddess?*

Egyptologists often call Hathor a mother-goddess. A justifiable question is : does Hathor deserve this qualification ?

It is true that she acts as the mother of Horus. Her name *Ht Hr* can be interpreted in this sense. No mention is made of the father of this divine child, however. This is revealing. Hathor always jealously guarded her independence and never allowed herself to be trapped in any mythological system that could detract from her true nature. Objections may be made to this pronouncement by pointing out that Horus of Edfu was her companion, at least in the Ptolemaic era, and that she regularly visited him at Edfu. Many even believe she celebrates the *lepos gamos* with him. The accuracy of this view will be investigated further in the chapter on the cult of Hathor. For the time being let it be noted that Horus was definitely not her only partner. In the later texts Shu is mentioned as her husband, ¹ whilst Amon also appears to fulfil this function. ² Naturally mention must also be made of the fact that two sons of Hathor are known to us from the Ptolemaic temples. These are Ihy and Harsomtus, two gods who will be introduced in greater detail below.

The possession of sons means that Hathor is a goddess who is a mother, but not necessarily that she is a mother-goddess in the sense of that word used in reference to the history of religions. The concept of mother-goddess belongs originally to certain other ancient religions, such as those of Mesopotamia, Syria and Greece. ³ A few representatives of this type of godhead are easily found. For example there are Ki and Inanna in Sumerian mythology, Ishtar in ancient Babylonia, Anat in the religious literature of Ras Shamra, Gaia and in a broader sense a number of goddesses in ancient Greece, and Kybele in the Hellenistic era.

The characteristics of the great mother-goddess are well known. The question is whether they are discernible in Hathor. In the first place the mother-goddess is associated with the earth. This feature is entirely lacking in Hathor. On the contrary she is a sky-goddess. There are chthonic gods in Egypt, but these are males, such as Geb the typical earth-god, Ptah, and Osiris too in a certain sense.

¹ JUNKER, *Onurislegende*, p. 7, 31.

² FR. DAUMAS, *Les mammisis des égyptiens*. 1958, p. 503.

³ C.J. BLEEKER, *De moedergodin in de oudheid*.

In the second place the mother-goddess is often represented in the nude, and the image either accentuates pregnancy or the vulva. There are no naked gods or goddesses in Egypt, with the exception of the youthful Horus, the child of Osiris and Isis, and Ihy and Harsomtus, the aforesaid sons of Hathor. In this instance the nudity does not accentuate the sex, it indicates the youth of the godhead.

Still the texts contain a number of allusions to a strange behaviour on the part of Hathor. She is said to have appeared naked on a few occasions — a *fascinans* for the gods and a *tremendum* for the mortals. The text entitled "The Contendings of Horus and Seth" which describes a long-drawn-out process between these gods, relates how at one moment Re was greatly distracted during this laborious, dragging lawsuit. Then Hathor knew the remedy. The text says: "Then Hathor, the Lady of the southern sycomore, came and she stood before her father, the All-Lord, and she uncovered her private parts before his face. Then the Great God laughed at her."¹ In addition there is a rather obscure story in which Hathor is said to have revealed herself in her true shape to a cowherd, to his immense consternation. This cowherd was watching over his cattle in the marshy region where Hathor is supposed to dwell as a wild cow. There he met a woman who did not appear human. She had taken off her clothes and her hair was tousled. The cowherd was filled with terror, and he urged his cattle to return home speedily.²

These data are important, both for answering the question whether Hathor really was a mother-goddess, and for our insight into the views on sexuality and erotism held by the ancients. With respect to the latter the Egyptian data, better than the representation of the naked mother-goddess, demonstrate that sexuality, in *casu nudity*, was conceived of as a sacral quality: a *fascinans*, but also a *tremendum*. The fact that Hathor unexpectedly revealed herself in her true form on a rare occasion or two proves that the strong accent on sexuality found in the conventional image of the mother-goddess is absent in her case.

In the third place the mother-goddess is renowned as the patroness of love, as bestower of the blessing of children, as the goddess who promotes fertility in general. This trait is easily discernible in Hathor. One of her epithets is *nb.t htp.t*, mistress of the vulva.³ Wooden phalli

¹ A. GARDINER, *Late-Egyptian Stories*, *Bibliotheca aegyptica*; G. ROEDER, *Mythen und Legenden um ägyptischen Gottheiten und Pharaonen*, 1960, p. 35 sq.; J.B. PRITCHARD, *ANET*, 1955, p. 15.

² A. ERMAN, *Die Literatur der Ägypter*, 1923, p. 63/4; MORTAH, *Die uralte Sykomore*.

³ W.B. 3: 195.

have been found in Hathor's sanctuary at Deir el-Bahri.¹ She is the goddess who disposes over conception and birth. In the magic-medical texts Hathor is called "the one who is giving birth."² That is why the woman in childbirth turns to her in prayer for support during her labour pains. The texts say: "Look, Hathor will lay her hand on her (the woman in childbirth) with an amulet of health."³ The woman who is about to give birth to child says: "Come to me, Hathor, my mistress, in my fine pavilion, in this happy hour with (?) this pleasant north (wind)..."⁴ The theme recurs in the Hathor hymns. A song from the temple of Medinet Habu contains the following invocation:

"Thou who livest on the earth,
and passeth by this chapel

.....

Thou honourest the great god in Medinet Habu,
And thy wives (praise) Hathor, the mistress of the fort of the West,
In order that the goddess has your wives
Give birth to boys and girls,
In order that they become not sterile
And you not barren."⁵

Hathor is expected to promote fertility in general, and so she is called "the one who makes the plants germinate", "the one who brings forth the bread", "She who, by her fertility, brings abundance in all Egypt". In particular she is protectress of procreation and love among mankind. A Hathor song begins with the invocation:

"Exalted is Hathor, [goddess] of love..."⁶

and one of her honorary titles is "mistress of love."⁷

Love is a polyvalent conception. If an ancient goddess is called patroness of love, the first thought that springs to mind is that she stimulates sexuality. But Hathor does also foster the affection of the heart by which two young people come together. The hymns testify to this. People in love turn to Hathor with the prayer that she may fulfil their amorous yearnings. This yearning can be heard in the words:

¹ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 277-282: Hathor; G.D. HORNBLOWER, *Phallic Offerings to Hat-hor* (Man, May 1926, N° 52).

² J.F. BORGHOUTS, *The Magical Texts of Papyrus Leiden I 348*, 1971, p. 29.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 29, p. 153, note 365.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 30.

⁵ S. SCHOTT, *Altägyptische Liebeslieder*, 1950, p. 82/3.

⁶ A.M. BLACKMAN, *The rock tombs of Meir*, 1914, I, Plate II, p. 23.

⁷ A. MARIETTE, *Dendérah, Description générale du grand temple de cette ville*, 1975, p. 325

"I send a prayer up to my goddess (Hathor),
That she may give me the present of my sister" (supplicatory name for loved one).¹

And even more passionate :

"O Golden one, let it be in her heart,
Then I shall hasten to the brother (loved one)
and I shall kiss him in the presence of his comrades." ²

When two lovers are united, they acknowledge that this joyful event is a dispensation of Hathor. In this context Hathor reveals that she is the one who decides the fate of man, a quality better discussed in a different connection. And now a few instances of this acknowledgement. A woman cries out :

"Brother, O, I am among the women
destined for you by the Goddess." ³

A man is told :

"The Golden has destined her for you
O, my friend." ⁴

Hathor brings the lovers together, and yet they sense that they merely obey the inner urge of their hearts. The following exultant song is a testimonial to this :

"I prayed to her (Hathor) and she heard my prayer.
She destined my mistress (loved one) for me.
And she came of her own will to see me.
How tremendous is that which overcame me.
I rejoice, I exult, I am very proud,
since the moment when it was said :
See, here she is." ⁵

The conclusion to be drawn from these observations is obvious. Hathor is certainly not a mother-goddess in the strict sense of the term as used in the study of the history of religions. She does not possess the chthonic element necessary for that. Moreover it will gradually appear that her nature is too complicated to be characterised by this term. Only in a limited sense, because she promotes all forms of life in the

¹ A.H. GARDINER, *The Chester Beatty Papyri No 1*, 1931, p. 33.

² *Op. cit.* ibidem.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 31.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 36.

⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 33.

animal, in the vegetable and also in the human worlds, is she a mother-goddess. In the last mentioned world she not only stimulates procreation, but also the affections of the heart.

d) *The goddess of the deceased*

Life and death are inseparable. They form the greatest antithesis imaginable, but can nevertheless be reconciled and united. W. B. KRISTENSEN wrote a profound treatise on "death as an enemy and as friend."¹ This expression formulates a thought that is characteristic of the religious mentality of the Egyptians. They were convinced that both gods and mortals could overcome death and so attain true life.² As for the mortals, it is a well-known fact that the mummification, the elaborate funerary ceremonial, the grave itself and the cult of the dead all served to ensure the deceased continued existence in the hereafter and a lasting renewal of their lives.³

As for his fate after death, the Egyptian also placed his hope on Hathor. She who granted abundant life on earth was also expected to take care of the departed. The Coffin Texts say of the deceased: "Hathor has anointed him, she will give him life in the West (realm of the dead), like Re, daily."⁴ Strangely enough Hathor sometimes operates as cow-goddess in this respect. With reference to what was said above in II Da about the help given to the dead by divine cows, another interesting detail can be mentioned. Three beds in the grave of Tutankhamon built in the shape of a cow evidently express the idea that the departed will rise again thanks to the divine cow.⁵ Hathor is not mentioned by name here, but the inference is obvious.

From the time of the Old Kingdom Hathor was called *nb.t smj.t*, mistress of the (western) desert, of the necropolis and the realm of the dead.⁶ As goddess of the dead she was venerated especially in the Theban necropolis. There she was associated with Amentet and Meresger.⁷ These are related goddesses. Amentet is, as her name signi-

¹ W. B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*.

² C. J. BLEEKER, *De overwinning op de dood*, 1942.

³ C. J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, Chapter VI.

⁴ MARIA MÜNSTER, *Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis, vom alten Reich bis zum Ende des neuen Reiches*, 1968, p. 40.

⁵ G. JÉQUIER, *Considérations sur les religions égyptiennes*, 1946, III La vache Hathor.

⁶ MÜNSTER, *op. cit.* p. 104.

⁷ JÉQUIER, *op. cit.* V 3.

fies, the goddess of the West, the realm of the dead. The name of Meresger means "she who loves silence", a characteristic name for a death-goddess, for the realm of the dead is an aphonous land where silence reigns, where the dead find peace and quiet. It is quite clear that, as goddess of the deceased, Hathor overshadows the other two goddesses just mentioned.

It is not surprising that she appears in the royal tombs, as for instance that of Seti I. She bears the characteristic symbol of the West, the realm of the dead, on her head, but is unmistakably recognisable as Hathor because of her name and customary titles.¹ Hathor also had an important part in what was called the "beautiful festival of the desert valley" which was held in the necropolis. We know how this festival was celebrated during the 18th dynasty.² It consisted of a visit paid to the necropolis by the sacred barque of Amon from the temple at Karnak. This passage was a magnificent spectacle. The king conducted the rituals; a flotilla of smaller boats followed the ship that carried the barque of Amon, placed on a sledge for pulling it overland on either side of the Nile. The salient feature of this festival was its spirit of joyfulness. The aim was to let the dead share in the rejoicings and so renew their lives. It appears that the mortuary effigy of the deceased was taken along in the procession of Amon and later returned to the grave. There a family festivity complete with male and female choristers was held. The departed was offered a bouquet of flowers as a symbol of the life wished him. There was a banquet too.³ During this festivity Hathor was constantly present: she was patroness of the festivity and its invisible witness. It is significant that the deceased was presented with the typical attributes of Hathor, the sistrum and the necklace. Both of these ornaments possess a deeper meaning. An inscription says: "Stretch out the hand to take the necklace of Hathor, the mistress of inebriety."⁴ The epithet given Hathor here suggests that the feast was meant to cheer up the deceased with exuberant rejoicings. In another context this epithet is explained in greater detail. Various graves contain an offer to Hathor, which indicates that she was honoured at this feast. For example a group of singers offer a fan to "Hathor, queen of the heavens".⁵ Elsewhere is said: "dedicate

¹ M.E. LEFÉBURE, *Le Tombeau de Séti I*, 1886, I pl. XXXII.

² S. SCHOTT, *Das schöne Fest vom Wüstentale, Festbräuche einer Totenstadt*, 1953.

³ C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 137 sq.

⁴ SCHOTT, *op. cit.* p. 42, 112.

⁵ *Idem* p. 44.

all beautiful and good things to.....Hathor, mistress of inebriety, to Hathor, ruler of the desert.”¹ The butchers who have to prepare the offer of meat are told : “move your arm for the consecrated gift to the lord of eternity and to Hathor, mistress of inebriety, so that they might receive him who brings this (gift) as a blessed one (namely in the hereafter).”²

Hathor's presence is also recognised elsewhere and not only in the Theban necropolis, for instance in two graves at Meir dating from the Middle Kingdom. In both the proprietor of the grave, in stately stance, receives the homage of a festive procession of musicians and male and female singers. We see three dancers waving their *mnj.t* and their sistrum, typical attributes of Hathor, in the direction of the deceased. One of them says : “for (i.e. to increase) your vitality, the necklace of Hathor; may she bless you”. Another exclaims : “for your vitality the neck-ornaments of Hathor : may she lengthen your life to (the number of) years you desire”. Meanwhile there steps forward a man who offers the deceased two conical loaves and two flat biscuits, uttering the words : “for your vitality : the *sn.w*-loaf of Hathor, may she be well-disposed towards you” — This is accompanied by a song glorifying Hathor which is sung by the harpist.³

What does the deceased expect of Hathor ? The texts give a pertinent answer to this question. In the first place the deceased hopes for the benefits which Hathor as tree-goddess can give him, namely that she will offer him a refreshing drink from her tree,⁴ and will let him sit beside her under her tree. Proudly he says : “I sit under the branches of the tree in the vicinity of Hathor.”⁵ He wishes to be admitted to her retinue. As the deceased says in the Coffin Texts : “I am in the retinue of Hathor”.⁶ The title of the text of Spell 103 of the Book of the Dead is “Spell to be in the retinue of Hathor.”⁷ The deceased prides himself on being in the service of Hathor as her secretary. A spell in the Coffin Texts is entitled : “becoming the clerk at the altar of Hathor.”⁸ Indeed, he can even boast of the fact that he is the foremost of this

¹ Idem p. 98.

² Idem p. 105.

³ C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 133.

⁴ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 277 sq. : Hathor.

⁵ G. ROEDER, *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Ägypten*, 1923, p. 262.

⁶ C.T. VI 62e.

⁷ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, I pl. CXV.

⁸ C.T. IV 1951.

guild : "I have been promoted above all her clerks." ¹ The deceased makes it quite clear that he is skilled in the work of clerk. He says : "I am in possession of the quills of Ma-a-t" ², "I know the name of the ink", ³ "I know the name of the water-bowl." ⁴ To know the name of someone or something means to know his or its essence and to have power over the person or thing. Furthermore the deceased declares that he serves Hathor in other ways by carrying out all sorts of commissions for her. A special privilege is that he is permitted to attend to part of her toilet : he fastens her *tštn*, a garment or ornament of unknown form and purpose. Thus the deceased says : 'I have come to fasten the *tštn* of Hathor.' ⁵ He also hands her the *tšj.t* ⁶, which must be a sort of textile, for *Tšj.t* is the goddess of the art of weaving. Also the "spell for boarding the boat of Hathor" tells us about the tasks he performs on board. ⁷

The association with Hathor is so close that the deceased identified himself with her. The title of a spell in the Coffin Texts runs : "becoming Hathor" ⁸ In it we read : "I am Hathor, I have appeared as Hathor, who is descended from the primeval age, the queen of the All." ⁹ In later periods women in particular were identified with Hathor. ¹⁰ After death the men were Osirified, the women were given the status of Hathor. This in no way implies that the deceased placed himself on a level with the gods. He was aware of the distance between God and man. Bearing in mind what was said in I B6 concerning the Egyptian conception of the relationship between God and man, the passage quoted should be interpreted as expressing the hope and the conviction that in and through death the deceased is enabled to participate in the creative and renewing life of the godhead. As for Hathor, faith in her power was so great that an effigy of this goddess was hung around the neck of the mummy, in the conviction that this amulet would ward off all evil! ¹¹

¹ C.T. VI 135u.

² C.T. VI 135 mn.

³ C.T. VI 142 c.

⁴ C.T. VI 142 f.

⁵ C.T. VI 63 f, 63 k.

⁶ C.T. VI 64 f.

⁷ C.T. V 239.

⁸ C.T. IV 172 a.

⁹ C.T. IV 172 b, h.

¹⁰ A. ERMAN, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, 1934, p. 409.

¹¹ BUDGE, *Book of the Dead*, chapter CLXII; W.M. FLINDERS PETRIE, *Abydos*, LXXVI, LXXVII, Bronze Hypocephali.

e) *The sky-goddess*

Hathor's versatility is clearly manifested in the remarkable fact that she is also a sky-goddess. It was not without reason that the Greeks identified Hathor, the lady of Kusae, with Aphrodite Urania.¹ One of her standing titles is "mistress of the sky". There is data to prove she fulfilled this function since time immemorial.²

The presentation of Hathor as sky-goddess can best be linked up with the Egyptian form of her name, *Ht Hr*, usually translated as "the house of Horus". Since this Horus is the sky and sun-god, as observed in II B, the obvious conclusion is to associate Hathor with the sky as well. This immediately gives rise to the question as to how this relationship should be seen. But first the data must be carefully examined, and then the question can be answered towards the end of this section.

Firstly it appears that Hathor was known as sky-goddess as early as the Pyramid Texts, which mention "the house of Horus, which is in the sky" (pyr. 1025). It is said that the deceased pharaoh, assisted by certain gods, will ascend to "Hathor, who is in the sky" (pyr. 1026/7). Elsewhere we find "Hathor in this sky" (pyr. 1278). In this passage and in pyramid text 1327, the word used for sky is *kbbh*, which originally means 'cool water', but is also a designation for the sky, where the sky-ocean was thought to be.

The Coffin Texts reiterate this theme and more elaborately. The deceased prays: "Hathor, reach me thy hand, (so that) thou taketh me up to the sky" (V, 159 cd and IV, 52). Or he says: "Hathor has made me rise up (to the sky)" (V, 272b-273d; V, 330q-t). Hathor says of herself: "I am Hathor, mistress of the Northern sky" (IV, 177j-178a). Her deceased is promised that "the wings of the sky-doors will be opened for thy beauty (i.e. thy person); Thou risest up; Thou seest Hathor" (I, 181 ab). Hathor is called: "the ruler of the sky, the monarch over all gods" (V, 298c). It is said of her "She leads the sky" (VI, 48 df). Her qualification "monarch of the sky" also occurs in the letters of the monarchs of the Middle Kingdom who held priestly offices.³

This line is continued in the texts of the Book of the Dead. There, too, Hathor is assumed to be in the sky. The deceased says of himself:

¹ ALLAM, *Hathorkult*, p. 25

² *Op. cit.* p. 25 sq.; 100 sq.; *BiOr* XV, No 5, Sept. 1958: article DRIOTON.

³ ALLAM, *op. cit.* p. 25 sq.;

"I am a distinguished beatified person; prepare my path to the place where Re, Atum, Kheprer and Hathor are" (Spell 170). According to this text, Hathor resides in the sky with the sun-god in his three well-knowns forms, namely Kheprer the rising sun, Re who walks across the firmament, and Atum, the setting sun.

Hathor in the presence of the sun-god during the various stages of his diurnal course suggests that here she is conceived of as goddess of the diurnal sky. Undoubtedly she did fulfil this role, but there are solid grounds for considering her to be primarily the goddess of the nocturnal sky. It is in this quality that she continues her function as goddess of the dead, for the nocturnal sky is often looked upon as the nether-world. ¹ Pyramid text 390 clearly states that, assisted by Horus and Seth, the dead pharaoh climbs up the oft-described (sky) ladder to *Dwꜣt*, the customary designation of the nether-world. *Dwꜣt* is thus localised in the sky. The reasons for the interpretation of Hathor as goddess of the nocturnal sky are as follows. The prehistoric Hathor-head mentioned in IIC has stars at the points of the horns, at the ears and on the forehead. This indicates the nocturnal sky, as does the well-known epithet "mistress of the stars". This is her title, for example, in the song sung by the royal children to greet Sinuhe on his return to Egypt and to propitiate the king in his favour. They sing to the pharaoh: "May the Golden give life to thy nose, may the ruler of the stars be united with thee." ² In the Book of the Dead she is called "mistress of the evening." ³ Finally mention might be made of the fact that Hathor is often portrayed with two feathers and a sun-disc on her cow-head and stars on her body. ⁴ The stars are quite unmistakable. The feathers or wings are found in three categories of gods: the sun-god, wind-gods and sky-goddesses. The feather is apparently a symbol for the sky and particularly a symbol of the nocturnal sky and of the nether-world. ⁵

The sky-goddess par excellence is Nut. She, too, often plays the role of goddess of the nocturnal sky. There is the famous portrait of Nut

¹ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Aegypternes Forestillinger om Livet efter Døden i forbindelse med guderne Ra og Osiris*, 1896, p. 50 sq.

² A. DE BUOK, *Ägyptische verhalen*, 1928, p. 67. ; A. ERMAN, *Die Literatur der Ägypter*, 1923, p. 54.

³ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 108 : 15; C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 1951, p. 345.

⁴ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 49.

⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 47 sq.

on the innerside of the lid of a sarcophagus, placed there so that she may arch over the deceased, take him in her womb and thus renew his life. This representation expresses the deceased's wish that he may share the fate of the sun-god, for it shows how she takes the disc of the setting sun in her mouth and gives birth to the rising sun from the womb of her star-studded body.¹

What is the relationship between Hathor and Nut? Apart from the obvious points of agreement, is there any typological difference? This question can best be answered with the assistance of parallels from the history of religions, in which we find two conceptions of the sky-goddess. Firstly the sky as such is conceived of and venerated as a deity. Secondly the sky-god is thought to have his throne in the sky.² These two conceptions throw light on the relationship between Hathor and Nut as sky-goddesses. Nut is clearly the divine sky, the firmament seen as deity. Hathor, on the contrary, resides *in* the sky. The texts cited leave no room for doubt on this point: the deceased, who ascends to the sky, hopes to meet Hathor there, to look upon her, to be one of her retinue and to perform all sorts of tasks for her. This interpretation could be based on a translation of the name *Ht Hr* as "my house is the sky", which occurs alongside the customary one, "the house of Horus."³

f) *The sun-eye*

It sounds paradoxal that Hathor, goddess of the nocturnal sky, also plays the role of sun-eye. Darkness and light seem to be incompatible, but only superficially so. These contrasts can be reconciled, for, according to the Egyptian notion, out of the dark night the sun-god is born anew each morning. The sun is latently present in the nocturnal sky, which is conceived of as the nether-world. In a hymn Re is entitled "the beautiful, the youthful, who art present as sun-disc in the womb of thy mother Hathor."⁴ In appearing the sun-eye reveals a new facet of Hathor's being. This idea finds expression in the mythological representation of Hathor as sky-cow who bears the sun-god between her horns and in the usual portrait of the goddess with the sun-disc between her horns. In a later chapter dealing with the relationship

¹ See f.i. in A. DE BUCK, *De zegepraal van het licht*, 1930, pl. 13, 14.

² G. WIDENGREN, *Hochgottglaube im alten Iran*, 1938, p. 5 sq.; *Religionsphänomenologie*, 1969, p. 46 sq.

³ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 277: Hathor.

⁴ ED. MEYER, "Die Stele des Horemheb," *Z.Ä.S.* 15, 1877, p. 148 sq.

between Hathor and Re it will appear that an association exists between the goddess and the sun-god. Hence it is feasible that Hathor exercised a function of Re and at times acted as sun-eye.

As such she plays a part in the myth of the sun-eye, indeed an important and active part. Now the myth of the sun-eye is a strange thing. There are diverse versions of it, and moreover it is interwoven with other myths in an almost inextricable complex of mythical motifs. At this stage it is not expedient to do more than list without further comment the mythological variations. Later in the chapter on Thoth these motifs can be sifted critically when Thoth's function in this myth is discussed.

There can be no doubt as to the main theme of the myth. It is the notion that, for a certain reason, the sun-eye becomes separated from Re, leaves him and becomes an independent numen. This representation occurs in the following variations : (1) the eye is sent forth either to seek Shu and Tefnet, or to chastise the rebellious people, the enemies of Re ; (2) the eye is enraged, removes itself and then is reconciled to Re by Thoth. To these versions can be linked up the story about Tefnet, the savage lioness in the Nubian desert, whose rage is assuaged by the reasoning of Thoth and Shu and who is then enticed to Egypt, where she experiences a metamorphosis into a gay and benevolent goddess. Now versions 1 and 2 can be combined in such a way that the eye departs and becomes enraged with Re on its return, because another eye has taken its place. Reconciliation is possible only after it is given a place of honour on Re's head in the form of the uraeus. There is no pertinent reason for probing deeper into the problem of this myth, especially since competent Egyptologists have repeatedly dealt with this matter. ¹ What is pertinent to this matter here is a comment of a more general purport. This résumé of the forms of the myth of the sun-eye once more illustrates the ease with which the Egyptian associated mythological figures and themes that have any features in common. This, however, must not lead to the fallacy of thinking that the godly figures in question are perfectly identical. On closer perusal they prove

¹ H. JUNKER, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, Anhang der Abhand. d. preuss. Akad. 1911, p. 56 sq. ; H. GRAPOW, *Das 17 Kapitel des ägyptischen Totenbuches und seine religionshistorische Bedeutung*, 1912 ; W. SPIEGELBERG, *Der ägyptische Mythos vom Sonnenauge*, 1917 ; H. JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende* (kaiserl. Ak. der Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse, 59 Band, 1 und 2 Abhandlung, 1917), ERMAN, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, p. 63 sq. ; BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 733 sq.

to be completely different typologically. To ensure that the thread of the argument is not lost, it should be noted that the above remarks are made to provide the background to Hathor's role as sun-eye.

This story is related by an interesting myth in the exceptionally rare form of a consecutive story. It is a sun-myth, but Hathor is the leading figure in it.¹ Its theme is an attempt to destroy — or to save — mankind, depending on where the emphasis is placed. The contents of the story are briefly the following. When Re had become old and feeble, the people began to devise evil plans directed against him. As soon as he heard rumours of these plans, Re sent for the primeval deities Shu, Tefnet, Geb, Nut and Nun and also Hathor, his eye. After they had appeared before him and paid their homage to Re, he addressed Nun, the oldest of the gods, and asked him advise about measures to be taken against the rebellious people. Nun's advice was to despatch Hathor, the sun-eye, to chastise the people, who meanwhile had fled to the mountains for fear their blasphemous words would be punished. And so it came about. When Hathor returned from her expedition, she announced that she had joyfully fulfilled her commission by casting down the men and women. Apparently Re then became apprehensive that all of mankind would be exterminated. He therefore instructed swift messengers to fetch a red dye from Elephantine. This dyestuff was then to be mixed with beer, hastily brewed for the purpose and poured into seven thousand urns. At Re's command the beer was transported by night to the place where, on the following morning, Hathor was to resume her work of annihilation, and there it was to be poured out on the ground. When Hathor arrived at this spot the next morning, she saw the land flooded with this beer. She drank great draughts of it, because she found the taste to her liking, and becoming drunk she thought no more of the people she wanted to exterminate. In this way mankind was spared.

This strange myth could provide occasion for lengthy comment. For the sake of brevity, however, none will be given, particularly since in this connection our attention must be focussed on two features of the story which are important for understanding Hathor's character. In the first place Hathor as sun-eye is depicted here as a martial goddess. This is a trait she shares with Tefnet, the savage lioness. Little wonder that these two goddesses are associated with each other. Her bellicose

¹ LEFÉBURE, *Tombeau de Séti I*, IV, 15-18; E. LEHMANN und H. HAAS, *Textbuch zur Religionsgeschichte*, 1922, p. 255/6.

inclination, however, is an original feature of her nature, as appears from other statements: she combats her foes. Thus she incites to battle, for instance, in Spell 39 of the Book of the Dead, which is meant to repulse Apap, the characteristic enemy of Re. In verse 16 Hathor encourages her colleagues with the battle-cry: "take up your weapons". This bellicosity is a sign of an inflammable temperament. The second feature worthy of our attention points in the same direction: she in no way despises intoxicants. Presently we shall see her as goddess of inebriety. For that matter the epithet "mistress of inebriety" has already been mentioned. The qualification implies that she is also the goddess who rouses ecstasy and religious fervour. This sounds peculiar to one of the 20th century, but it should be remembered that in ancient times drunkenness and ecstasy went together. The intoxicant had a sacred significance, not so much because it provided pleasure, but particularly because it was the medium through which contact could be effectuated with the world of the gods.¹

g) *The royal goddess*

Like Horus,² Hathor had a special relationship with the pharaoh. She is rightly called a royal goddess, and in this quality she is linked in various ways with the life of the pharaoh.

That relationship is felt to be very close when the pharaoh calls himself the oldest son of Hathor (Pyr. 460). Pepi I is called the son of Hathor of Dendera,³ and Mentuhotep-Nebhepetrē also prides himself on this parentage.⁴ These are two monarchs who are known to have greatly promoted the cult of Horus and therefore looked upon Hathor as their ideal mother. Other pharaohs no doubt followed in their footsteps. So Hathor says to Hatshepsut: "I am thy mother who formed thy limbs and created thy beauty."⁵ Nut is also called the mother of the pharaoh. A possible division of the maternal duties is that Nut is the mother of the dead pharaoh and Hathor the mother of the living monarch.⁶ That means that Hathor assists at the birth of the royal

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Rausch und Begeisterung*, The Sacred Bridge, Researches into the Nature and Structure of Religion, 1963.

² FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 36 sq.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 172; KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 303; ALLAM, *Hathorkult*, p. 46.

⁴ ALLAM, *Hathorkult*, p. 1.

⁵ E. NAVILLE, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, 1907, Chapter VI.

⁶ FRANKFORT, *op. cit.* p. 175.

prince and blesses the life of the newly-born. This event is unfolded in the texts and imagery of the magnificent temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. There we see Hathor handing the newly-born princess to Amon, the mythical father, so that he might bless her. Then as cow-goddess she suckles the child. ¹ The suckling of the child by Hathor has a deeper meaning. It is not merely an expression of the care of the divine midwife for the child entrusted to her, but also has the significance of a royal ritual. A series of data support the conclusion that it is only through this divine mother-milk that the young prince becomes a true king. ² The prince receives this divine mother-milk either by being suckled by Hathor or by sucking from the udder of the Hathor-cow. ³ Representations in the temple and the mammisis or birth-houses at Dendera show how Hathor has the baby prince on her lap and suckles him like a real midwife. ⁴ Of a similar nature is the portrait found several times in the sanctuary of Hathor at Deir el-Bahri which depicts Hathor as cow-goddess licking the queen's hand. This gesture can be interpreted either as a mark of favour or as a sign that the goddess recognises the queen and wishes to give her power. ⁵

Hathor also guards over the king for the rest of his life. She makes him young and endows him with magic power, ⁶ for she is the goddess of rejuvenation and renewal. This explains why the pharaoh wears a ceremonial apron ornamented with Hathor heads (Pyr. 1096 b) as a magic protection and symbol of loyalty to the goddess. This must be an archaic article of apparel, since it was worn already in the first dynasty by King Narmer. ⁷

It goes without saying that Hathor assists the king during important cultic performances. The portraiture in the tomb of Kheruef depicts her presence at one of the oldest and most remarkable festivals celebrated by the king, the *ḥb-śd*. It is my belief that the purport of this festival was the renewing of the priestly dignity of the king. ⁸ An

¹ BAR II, 208; E. NAVILLE, *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari*, 1895.

² J. LECLANT, *Sur un contrepoids de menat au nom de Taharqa, allaitement et "apparition" royale*, 1961.

³ *Egyptian Mythology*, 1965, p. 59.

⁴ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, III 38j; F. DAUMAS, *Les Mammisis de Dendera*, 1959, pl. LVII sq.

⁵ E. NAVILLE, *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari*, 1895, IV pl. LXXXVII, XCIV, XCVI.

⁶ MARIA MÜNSTER, *Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis*, p. 67.

⁷ QUIBELL, *Hierakonpolis*, I 29.

⁸ BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 113 sq.

extremely momentous ritual celebrated at this festival was the erection of the so-called *ḏd* pillar, a ceremony which symbolises and dramatises the resurrection of divine life.¹ Hathor attends this ritual act. She stands behind the pharaoh, who is seated in a chapel, and lays her hand on his shoulder in a gesture which indubitably signifies that she protects him with her power.²

Obviously the king wants to express his gratitude to Hathor by making offers to the goddess. Many striking examples of this are to be found in the representations in the Hathor temple at Dendera. This theme is discussed further in the chapter on the cult of Hathor. Suffice it to mention one curious offer made by the king to Hathor — a mirror fashioned by Ptah and by Sokaris.³ One automatically wonders whether this mirror was simply part of Hathor's toilet, or whether it had a symbolic meaning. Although no direct proof for such has been found in Egypt, this mirror could possibly be taken to be a symbol of the sun, in particular the sun-disc. In that case it would be a fitting offer to Hathor as sun-eye, especially fitting since the offer is made by the pharaoh, who ideologically is the son of the sun-god. It is a homage to Hathor, who is a royal goddess, because she gave birth to Re, the mythical king, and because ideologically she is the mother of the pharaoh.

h) *The Patroness of dance, music and song.*

R. R. MARETT, renowned scholar of primitive religions, is responsible for the noted statement that the earliest religious consciousness was more "danced out than thought out". Dance, song and music comprise the oldest means employed by man to express his emotions and reactions to life and the world. They were not only an outlet for his sense of the artistic and his urge to express himself in physical action, but they also, and equally, as MARETT rightly remarks, enabled him to give expression to his religious feelings and beliefs. In other words they were of a sacred nature. Sacral dances and religious music and song form an important and fascinating aspect of the religions of the earth. It is a field of the history of religions which holds the promise of inter-

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 83, 102, 108, 111, 116 sq.

² *Op. cit.* p. 102; FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 178.

³ MAJ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *The God Ptah*, 1946, p. 50.

esting exploitation for scholars who have knowledge of and congeniality with this aspect.¹

The ancient Egyptians also practised these sacral arts. Their religious poetry is very well-known. The Egyptians were gifted poets and have handed down numerous beautiful hymns dedicated to gods and kings. Moreover the dance was included in their cultic acts, as every Egyptologist who is acquainted with the texts and graphic representations knows. A well-documented survey of this material is contained in the chapter on Egypt in the monograph "Les dances sacrées."² As for music, a more recent study gives an insight into the development, nature and significance of the art in the Nile Valley in ancient times.³ These works relieve me of the necessity of elaborating on this subject in general. Consequently we can proceed directly to the question as to what role these arts played in the worship of Hathor. The answer to this question is of such great importance because, as shall appear, the nature of Hathor is nowhere revealed so strikingly as in her love for these arts.

Hathor's delight in dance, music and song can be inferred from the epithets ascribed to her in certain passages in the hymns written in her honour. She is called "mistress of the dance, the queen of happiness,"⁴ "mistress of inebriety, of jubilation and of music."⁵ Elsewhere she is addressed in the words: "Thou art the lady of the dance, the mistress of the songs and dances accompanied by the lute, whose face shines each day, who knows no sorrow."⁶ Chapter I "Introduction" began with a strophe taken from a hymn in which the seven Hathors proclaim that they sing songs to delight the heart of the great goddess. In the same song they praise Hathor in this way:

"We laud thee with delightful songs,
For thou art the mistress of jubilation,
The mistress of music, the queen of harp-playing,
The lady of the dance,
The mistress of the chorus-dance, the queen of wreath-weaving."⁷

¹ G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Wegen en grenzen, de verhouding van religie en kunst*, 1955

² *Sources orientales VI*, 1963.

³ H. HICKMANN, *Musicologie Pharaonique, études sur l'évolution de l'art musical dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 1956.

⁴ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II 66 a; E. CHASSINAT, *Le Temple de Dendera*, 1934, III, 59.

⁵ MARIETTE, *op. cit.* II 66 b; CHASSINAT, *op. cit.* III 58.

⁶ F. DAUMAS, "Les propylées du temple d'Hathor à Philae et le culte de la déesse," *Z.A.S.* 95, p. 1 sq.

⁷ JUNKER, *Poesie aus der Spätzeit O 2*.

No details are known of the music used in the cult of Hathor. Judging by the epithets used to describe the goddess in the above quotation, it may be assumed that the musical accompaniment to the hymns and dances was of a happy, sonorous, exuberant, enthusiastic and even ecstatic nature.

Much more is known about the nature of the songs sung in worship of Hathor, thanks to a number of beautiful hymns dedicated to the goddess.¹ In the chapter on the cult of Hathor there will be suitable occasion to scrutinise the spirit and the feelings behind the worship of Hathor. In the meanwhile it can be said that all these songs testify to the great popularity of Hathor and to the respect, admiration and affection cherished by her adherents for her. In this context I merely wish to emphasise that in this poetry Hathor was revered as the exuberant goddess who was able to rouse the enthusiasm of her followers.

An occasional song is characterised, *expressis verbis*, as dance-song, as for example the following one, dedicated to Hathor as goddess of wine, in which the pharaoh appears as dancer :

"The pharaoh comes to dance
He comes to sing (for thee)
 O, his mistress, see how he dances,
 O, bride of Horus, see how he skips,
The pharaoh whose hands are washed,
Whose fingers are clean,
 O, his mistress, see how he dances,
 O, bride of Horus, see how he skips.
When he offers thee
This *mnw*-urn (with wine)
 O, his mistress, see how he dances,
 O, bride of Horus, see how he skips,
His heart is sincere, his body in order,
There is no darkness in his breast,
 O, his mistress, see how he dances,
 O, bride of Horus, see how he skips." ²

This brings us to the dances performed in honour of Hathor or rather

¹ SCHAFIK ALLAM, *Beiträge zum Hathorkult* (bis zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches) 1963; A.M. BLACKMAN, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, 1914, Part I; FR. DAUMAS, "Les propylées du temple d'Hathor à Philae et le culte de la déesse," *Z.Ä.S.* 95; A. HERMANN, *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung*, 1959; H. JUNKER, "Poesie aus der Spätzeit," *Z.Ä.S.* 43, 1906; S. SCHOTT, *Altägyptische Liebeslieder*, 1950; BORIS TURAJEFF, "Die naophore Statue im Vatikan," *Z.A.S.* 46 — This list does not pretend to be exhaustive.

² JUNKER, *Poesie aus der Spätzeit*, A a.

to the theme of Hathor as patroness of the dance. In order to evaluate this quality of the goddess, it is expedient first to summarise the various categories of religious dance.¹ The following types can be distinguished: (1) dances performed by the gods, e.g. Ihy, son of Hathor, is pre-eminently the divine dancer; (2) dances performed in the cult for and in honour of the gods, e.g. the many striking examples found in the temple portraiture; (3) dances performed at great festivals, e.g. the remarkable cultic dance of the pharaoh during the *h̄b šd*; (4) funerary dances. In addition to this classification according to a formal standpoint, there is another possibility, a classification based on the purport of the various sorts of dances. The latter are as follows: (1) dances in honour of and for the diversion of the godhead; (2) dances for the promotion of fertility; (3) dances to delight the deceased and to increase magically their vitality. These also honour the relevant godhead who protects the deceased.

Now a number of festivals can be mentioned at which dances were performed in honour of Hathor, officially sometimes by the pharaoh as we have seen, or by trained groups of dancers, semi-officially certainly by the people who participated in the festive joy and spontaneously expressed their allegiance to the goddess. In the already mentioned tomb of Kheruef we can see how, at the *h̄b šd* of Amenophis III, dances were performed in the presence of Hathor.² Her temple at Deir el-Bahri contains a representation of a festive procession held on New Year's day in which Libians demonstrate their famous art of dancing. There was energetic dancing at the festival to commemorate the arrival from Nubia of Tefnet — with whom Hathor was identified — a festival lasting fourteen days. When, in the month Epiphi, Hathor visits Horus of Edfu (discussed in detail below), she is welcomed with music and dance. During the previously mentioned "beautiful festival of the desert valley" which was under the patronage of Hathor, performances were given by dancers and acrobats. Mention has already been made of the song which accompanied the dance of the pharaoh at the festival of inebriety.³ These are a few examples.

¹ *Danses sacrées*, p. 33 sq.

² BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 101, 119.

³ A. FAKHRY, *A Note on the Tomb of Khreuf at Thebes*, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, Tome XLII, 1943.

⁴ *Danses sacrées*, p. 46, 50, 56, 60, 63. See also: E. BRUNNER-TRAUT, *Der Tanz im alten Ägypten nach bildlichen und inschriftlichen Zeugnissen*, 1938, p. 22, 40, 42, 48.

"The beautiful festival of the desert valley" is partially a festival of the dead. There are other examples of how the dance constituted an essential element of funerary solemnities under the guardianship of Hathor. The grave of Idu from the age of the 6th Dynasty, contains a graphic description of dancers accompanied by a hymn which apparently glorifies Hathor. An acrobatic dance is depicted in the mastaba at Sakkara of the sixth dynasty Ka-gemni. The accompanying inscription invokes Hathor. In the grave house of Mereru-ka are portraits of complicated figures of dance performed under the patronage of Hathor. Ballet groups that evidently are in the service of Hathor perform in the graves dating from the end of the Old Kingdom and the Saitic age. The priesthood of Hathor at Meir honour the dead by performing a war dance. Female dancers demonstrate their graceful art in honour of Hathor, the Lady of Kusae. ¹ These examples suffice to make the point.

Now the decisive question in this connection arises. Given the classifications mentioned above of the religious dances and the examples of dancers honouring Hathor, what motifs characterise the Hathor dance? In what sense is Hathor the patroness of dance? The answer is inevitably as follows. In the Hathor dances the following motifs can be distinguished: (1) the need to please the goddess, to pay homage to her and to bring her joy; (2) the desire to promote, through the medium of the dance, the fertility of which Hathor is the donor. So in the scenes of the Hathor festival as portrayed in the grave of Antef-iker, there are erotic dances, ² also aimed at calming and propitiating the goddess with the inflammable temperament who is easily roused to anger. Thus runs a text from Edfu: "the gods play the sistrum for her (Hathor), the goddesses dance for her to dispel her bad temper." ³

One feature is common to all types of Hathor dances, they manifest impulsion, enthusiasm and tend to be ecstatic. Their purpose is to honour a goddess who personifies effervescent divine life and passion. This characteristic of Hathor dances becomes most apparent when they are compared with the sacred dance performed by the pharaoh at the *h̄b šd*. ⁴ Compared with the whirling Hathor dances, the dance of the pharaoh at the *h̄b šd* is a solemnly ritual progression without passion or emotion, certainly impressive but bereft of any grand pathos.

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 68, 69, 70, 71, 72.

² *Op. cit.* p. 65.

³ C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 1951, p. 306.

⁴ BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 119.

Should there be any doubts left about the ecstatic nature of the Hathor dances, then an irrefutable testimonial of it can be found in certain texts from the temple of Dendera. They mention dances held at night and performed by female dancers who, entranced by the wine, move their legs rapidly. ¹

E) HATHOR'S ATTRIBUTES

Egyptian gods are not distinguished by any individual features, but are recognisable either by the head of their sacred animal resting on their body, or by their attributes, such as head ornaments, staffs, weapons and other emblematic articles borne in their hands or ascribed to them. Special attention should therefore be paid to these attributes, because they have a symbolic significance and throw light on the deity to whom they pertain. This holds good for Hathor as well.

Hathor can easily be recognised by her headgear, horns enclosing a sun-disc. As observed in Chapters II A en II D, the horns typify her as a cow-goddess, whilst the sun-disc between the horns refers to the mythical primeval cow that carried the sun-god between its horns. The shape of this head ornament is very ancient: prehistoric rock paintings depict cattle with a sun-disc between their horns. ² Later this head ornament was embellished: the cap of Mut, the double crown, two tall feathers and the sistrum are added in turn or in combination. The two tall feathers, which are also worn by Amon, derive from Min ³ and are thought to demonstrate once more the primeval relationship between the goddesses Hathor and Min (see II C). The cap in the form of a vulture is taken from Mut. The latter goddess, whose name means 'vulture' and who wore this cap as token of her sacred animal, is a rather pallid figure who only achieved eminence as wife of the powerful Amon. ⁴ The double crown reveals the influence of the royal ideology: it characterises Hathor as queen of the two parts of Egypt ruled by the pharaoh. In the broader sense she is ruler of gods and men and is therefore often called "the queen of the gods".

In the second place, certain components of her apparel, named specifically, are significative. This applies firstly to the *tstn*. ⁵ In II Dd

¹ DAUMAS, *Les propylées du temple d'Hathor etc.*

² KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 75.

³ BLEEKER, *Min*, p. 20 sq.

⁴ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 491 sq.

⁵ W.B. 5, 410; 2, 367.

we saw how the deceased prides himself on being allowed to fasten the *tstn*. This simple act gives him the privilege of participating in the festival of Hathor.¹ The determinative of *tstn* suggests that it was a breast or neck ornament which had to be knotted. Knotting and weaving are ingenious arts, but in ancient Egypt they also had a symbolic significance: they are creative works. In Egypt the saying was that in the primordial age the creator 'knotted' the world, i.e. the two lands, meaning he created and planned them. The knot and woven fabric are tokens of integral life and of wisdom.² He who knots the *tstn* of Hathor not only gives her a costly ornament, but also receives a share in the meaningful creative life of which Hathor is the representative. Another article of her apparel is the *šndw.t*. The deceased pompously proclaims that, like Hathor, he wears the *šndw.t* garment, or that he may wear her *šndw.t*.³ The *šndw.t* is a linen apron worn by the king, evidently an archaic garment which marked his dignity. As Hathor's apparel it no doubt signified the same thing.

Thirdly attention must be paid to Hathor's ornaments. As distinctive she often wears the *mnj.t*, a necklace with a counter-weight. Apart from being a jewel which enhances the charm of Hathor, it is also a music instrument and a cultic object.⁴ By shaking this ornament and making a noise with it, it was possible to win the favour of an eminent person, such as the pharaoh or the godhead. It was also used to exercise magic power. By jingling the *mnj.t* whilst offering it to someone, the recipient is pleased and propitiated and is also endowed with power.⁵ It is possible to go even further. Diverse sources support the assumption that there is a relationship between the *mnj.t* on the one hand and on the other a number of royal rites such as the suckling of the royal heir, the ceremonies of the coronation and the *hb šd*. This justifies the designation of the *mnj.t* as a symbol of resurrection.⁶ Actually the *mnj.t* was used on occasions not connected with the cult of Hathor, but it is and remains the special ornament of Hathor. It is a characteristic symbol of this goddess. She is, as it were, present in it. It contains her power.

Closely connected to the *mnj.t* is the sistrum, not only because they

¹ *BiOr* jrg. XV, N° 5, Sept. 1958: article DRIOTON.

² W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, 1949, 63 sq.

³ *pyt.* 546; SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah* p. 26.

⁴ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 450: Menat.

⁵ A. HERRMANN, *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung*, 1959, p. 14 sq.

⁶ J. LECLANT, *Sur un contrepoids de menat*, p. 272 sq.

are often offered in combination as a present, but also because both were used to produce musical sounds. Of course the sistrum really is a music instrument. Later on the sistrum was a popular instrument in the Isis worship. Originally, however, it belonged to Hathor.

There are two types of sistrum, one in the shape of a bow strung with wires called *šhm*, and one in the shape of a rattle, called *šš.t*.¹ It appears that originally the sistrum was an independent sacral object. This is not strange. In ancient Egypt there were more of such primeval sacral objects, such as the sceptre and the crowns, which were held to be sorts of numen. Apparently the sistrum was expected to have a stimulating effect on fertility.² At an early stage Hathor took possession of this instrument for, after all, she is the patroness of music.

The sistrum bestows power and protection on whoever carries it. It is capable of propitiating gods and men. There are numerous portraits of the pharaoh offering the sistrum to Hathor in the temple at Dendera. This gift is meant "to cool her rage."³ Elsewhere is described the effect of the sistrum on Hathor: "it banishes the irritation, it dispels the rage that is the heart of the goddess and makes her affable after her grimness."⁴ In truth, Hathor is an all-powerful goddess with a combustible temperament which one must try to appease. PLUTARCH still knew of the apotropaic effect of the sistrum and enlarged on the symbolism of its shape.⁵ Together with the necklace the sistrum is offered to people as a tribute and a token of life. In the story of Sinuhe already quoted, the royal children offer their sistra and necklaces to the pharaoh as a token of their regard so that he might be propitiated and assured of Hathor's affection for him.⁶

In a broader sense, her ship is also one of the sacral attributes. The texts of the temple at Dendera even mention two ships with the poetic names *nb mrw.t* or 'mistress of love or lovability' and *psd t'wj* 'the one who illumines the two lands'.⁷ In the Coffin Texts there occurs a

¹ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 716 sq.; G. JÉQUIER, *Considérations sur les religions égyptiennes*, 1946, II 1; H. HICKMANN, *Terminologie musicale de l'Égypte ancienne*, Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte, Tome XXXVI, Fasc. 1, 1934/5, p. 590.

² H. HICKMANN, *Dieux et déesses de la musique*, Extrait des Cahiers d'Histoire Égyptienne, Sér. VI. fasc. 1, Mars, 1954, p. 39.

³ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II 53 a.

⁴ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 716: Sistrum.

⁵ PLUTARCHUS, *op. cit.* caput 63.

⁶ DE BUCK, *Egyptische verhalen*, p. 65/6.

⁷ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II 20 b.

passage, cited above, which is entitled "Spell for boarding the ship of Hathor."¹ This title suggests that to sail with the ship of Hathor was greatly to be desired. No wonder. The boat played an important role in ancient Egypt, not only as a means of transport on the Nile, but also in the cult of both the gods and the dead. For a detailed treatment of the theme of the sacred boat, reference might be made to the relevant literature.² In the present context it is important to know that the boat was looked upon as a numen, a being that represents the deity and, as it were, reincarnates the saving power of the deity in question. The same applies to the boat of Hathor. It is the expression of her being. When the boat was carried in procession, it was the dramatisation of the deity's hierophany.

Finally a few words must be devoted to an enigmatical cultic object of Hathor called *bꜣ.t*.³ In Pyramid Text 1096 the pharaoh is said to be "the *bꜣ.t* with the two faces." The determinative of *bꜣ.t* is a cow-head with ears and two horns seen front face. This is also the heraldic cognisance of the nome Diopolis parva. The *bꜣ.t* is thought to be the female soul (*bꜣ*).⁴ Another conception sees in the determinative of *bꜣ.t* in Pyramid Text 1096 the head of a bull and not of Hathor. The reference here is said to be to a martial bull-god venerated by the primeval population of Egypt.⁵ This theory, which is based on certain presumptions difficult to verify, is proof of how uncertain the explanation of the significance of the *bꜣ.t* is. Now there is also a fetish in the shape of a round pillar with two heads which is supposed to represent the *bꜣ.t* of Hathor.⁶ This fetish is said to typify Hathor as a goddess with a Janus character. The idea that the godhead has a double nature was not uncommon among the Egyptians. In Spell 17,64 of the Book of the Dead, mention is made of "Horus with two heads, the one bearing the truth, the other the lie". In Spell 64.4 the deceased calls himself 'the lord of the two faces'. In 64.5 'the double falcon' is mentioned. In Spell 71.11 appears 'the one who has two souls'. A real Janus-figure occurs in the grave of Seti I, called 'double-face'.⁷ These few examples could suggest that the *bꜣ.t* of

¹ C.T. VI 239 a.

² See: BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 77 sq.

³ W.B. I, 416.

⁴ K. SETHE, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, IV p. 368.

⁵ E. NAVILLE, *Le dieu Bat*.

⁶ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 278.

⁷ LEFÉBURE, *Tombeau de Sêti I, II*, XXIII.

Hathor expresses the duality of her being. If it were philologically tenable, it would be tempting to read *bꜣ.t* as *bꜣ.tj* = "the double soul". In the end one must just guess which dualism could be intended in this case. Probably not the polarity of truth and falsehood as in the instance of Horus in the Book of the Dead, but rather the duality of life and death. Nevertheless here, as so often in the study of Egyptian religion, one must conclude by pronouncing a 'non liquet'.

F) HATHOR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER GODS AND GODDESSES

Although Hathor was a very independent personality, she did entertain relationships with certain members of the Egyptian pantheon. This relationship is accidental at times and therefore not significant, but in most of the instances testifies to a certain kinship by which Hathor and the divinity in question were attracted to each other. Obviously one way of fathoming Hathor's character is to note the essential resemblances and differences between Hathor and the god or goddess with which she is associated. This is the approach that will now be taken. Since the gods and goddesses with whom Hathor is associated are well-known, they can be introduced without explanation or reference to sources.

Because of her name *Ht Hr*, Hathor is primarily associated with Horus. In Chapter II B it was already asserted that this Horus is the sky-god and not the son of Isis and Osiris with the same name. In spite of the fact that these two figures are often inextricably entangled, the Egyptians themselves were aware of the typological difference between the two Horus gods, as appears from the following data. In Pyramid Texts 466 and 467 a, a clear distinction is made between Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, and Horus, son of Hathor. In the dramatic text from Edfu which describes how Horus, the son of Osiris, combats his arch-enemy Seth, Isis encourages her son to battle by saying that soon he will perform heroic deeds comparable to those of Haroeris, that is the elder Horus, the sky-god.¹ The texts confirm the idea embodied in the name *Ht Hr*: Hathor is the mother of the sky-god Horus.² It is characteristic of the position of Hathor in the Egyptian pantheon that there is no mention of a father, as is the case with Horus, son of Osiris and Isis. Hathor's motherhood is therefore conceived of as

¹ E. DRIOTON, *Le texte dramatique d'Edfou*, 1948, p. 59.

² NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 186, 4; JUNKER, *Onurislegende*, p. 49, 116 sq.

parthenogenesis or as being purely symbolical. At this point the inadequacy of our knowledge of the Egyptian language suddenly becomes evident. To be specific, our insight into the finer distinctions in the religious terminology is not very deep. It is obvious that the word *ht* meaning house in *Ht Hr* is used figuratively. But what meaning did the Egyptians ascribe to this term? What did they mean when they said Hathor was the mother of Horus, without a word about a husband or father? Howsoever this may be, that a relationship was formed between Hathor and Horus, both sky-divinities, is understandable. When compared to each other, a striking difference emerges: Hathor is a fascinating, versatile personality, a goddess 'mulier semper variabilis'; Horus has a straightforward character, he is the indefatigable fighter of his adversaries.

In the Ptolemaic temples a different picture is given of the relationship between the divinities. There Horus of Edfu fulfils the role of Hathor's partner when they visit each other. In the chapter on the cult of Hathor a detailed treatment will be given of these meetings, which were celebrated with much pomp and ceremonial. In particular attention will be paid to the conception that the gods celebrate their *iepos gamos*.

In Dendera, two sons are ascribed to Hathor, namely Ihy¹ and Harsomtus.² The former is the divine musician and belongs to Hathor's retinue. The name Harsomtus is the interpretation of *Hr sm; t;wj*, meaning 'Horus who unites the two lands'. Somtus, the uniter of the two lands, must have been an ancient solar god who was later identified with Horus. His function is a very weighty one. The union of Upper and Lower Egypt signifies that the unity of the country is restored, it is once more intact and can live completely. This deed is reproduced graphically many times. It will be remembered that the act of uniting is represented as a tying together. Horus and Thoth stand on either side of the hieroglyph *sm;*, meaning 'to unite', and carry out the act of union by tying knots. As the personification of restored, complete life, Harsomtus fits into the entourage of Hathor. At Dendera Harsomtus is depicted as sitting on a lotus flower that rises above the water, as a serpent and often, too, in human form as either child or adult and even both at times in the same scene.³

¹ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 321/2.

² BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 728/9.

³ f.i. MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, I 73 b, 75.

To clarify the relationship between the two divinities in question, the significance of the motherhood of Hathor must be explained. It is common knowledge that the Egyptians used the forms of family kinship to establish order in the world of their gods and to associate certain gods with each other. Three forms are traditional : (a) a god, a goddess and a divine child ; (b) a god and two goddesses and (c) a goddess and two sons. These figures always form a triad. The last-mentioned form is the relevant one in the present case. But it is not the only scheme into which Hathor is placed at Dendera. There is yet another triad consisting of Hathor, Horus of Edfu and Harsomtut. In addition Hathor is associated with nine or eleven primeval gods, and there are other triads including Isis and Osiris. ¹

These data lead to the conclusion that Hathor's association with Ihy and Harsomtut is not as stable as it appeared. Again the question arises : what does Hathor's motherhood signify in this context, did she really give birth to these gods ? Now in Egypt the birth of gods is a very ancient conception. The stone of Palermo, which contains the annals of the kings of the earliest dynasties, mentions a festival called 'the birth of Min'. The birth of other gods is also mentioned. ² It is interesting to note in this connection that there are birth-houses or *mammisis* at the temples of Dendera, Edfu and Philae. These sanctuaries are the sites where the drama of divine birth was enacted. The walls are accordingly decorated with birth scenes. ³ At Dendera, the birth of Isis "in the shape of a black and red woman" was celebrated on the fourth intercalary day, called 'the day of the night of the child in its cradle' ⁴ A critical inspection of these instances of divine birth reveals that the father and (or) the mother of the new-born child stand in the shadow or are invisible. It is a spontaneous birth, the symbolic expression of the triumphant power of divine life. ⁵ This conception makes it easy to determine the relationship of Hathor with Ihy and Harsomtut. Ideologically the two gods fit into the company of Hathor. The term 'son' has a figurative connotation here. Even in the latter days of Egyptian culture and religion Hathor retained her independence and virginity. In this respect she can more aptly be compared with

¹ MARIETTE, *Description générale*, p. 309.

² BLEEKER, *Min.* p. 101.

³ F. DAUMAS, *Les Mammisis de Dendera*, 1959; BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 209/10.

⁴ MARIETTE, *Description générale*, p. 295.

⁵ BLEEKER, *Min.* p. 95 sq.

Athene, who remained parthenos though sometimes called mother, than with Aphrodite.¹

After what has been said of Hathor as sky-goddess and as sun-eye in Chapter II D e and f, it is not difficult to determine the relationship between Hathor and Re. This association goes back to the very distant past. Already on the Palermo Stone it is said that Hathor was worshipped in the sun temple.² There is a priest who is employed in the service of both divinities.³ In a spell in the Book of the Dead, the deceased says that he has gone to the place where Re and Hathor reside.⁴ In her relationship with Re, Hathor acts as mother, as wife and as daughter in turn. She is mother when she gives birth to the sun-god and, as mythical cow-goddess, places this deity between her horns. In this representation, as we have seen, her function can be distinguished but not easily separated from that of Nut and *Mht wr.t*. She is also the wife of Re. She is identified with Hetepet, the consort of the ancient sun-god Atum, and in this manner is said to have become the wife of Re.⁵ As sun-eye she is the daughter of Re. Her association with Re is also demonstrated by the fact that she often stands in the bows of the sun-ship as pilot, together with Ma-a-t.⁶

Understandably it was necessary to determine the relationship of Hathor as sky-goddess to Re, the sun-god who is supposed to transverse the firmament during the daytime, to descend into the netherworld (or the nocturnal sky) in the evening and thus to be reborn again in the morning. The Egyptians did not have at their disposal the philosophical concepts which the Jewish, Christian or Moslim theologians can apply. In accordance with their religious apperception (see I b 1) they expressed their religious beliefs in pictures derived from nature and family life, viewed not so much sociologically as a context in which new life is generated. The same is true of the relationship between Hathor and Re. The triple relationship described above is an attempt to express, in categories taken from marriage, the idea that Hathor represents a divine potency that is fundamental in the life of the sun-god, since on

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *De moedergodin in de oudheid*, p. 83 sq.

² H. SCHÄFER, *Ein Bruchstück altägyptischer Königsannalen*, Anhang zu Abh. der königl. preuss. Akademie, 1902.

³ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 126.

⁴ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 91, 4.

⁵ J. VANDIER, *Iousdas et (Hathor) Nébet-Hétepet*, *Revue de l'Égyptologie*, Tome 16 (1964), 17 (1965), 18 (1966).

⁶ Tombeau de Sêti I, II pl. XXIII; IV pl. XXV, XXIX, XXXII, XXXIX, XLVII.

the one hand she continually renews him and, on the other, springs from him.

A remarkable feature of the representation of Hathor given in the temple of Dendera is that more than once the emphasis is placed on her solar character. Mention is made of the glow surrounding her appearance.¹ On New Year's day an important ritual, discussed in the chapter on the cult of Hathor, was celebrated in this temple. Then the effigy of Hathor was carried to the roof of the temple, so that she could 'join with her father' when the rays of the rising sun shone on her.²

Interesting too is the relationship of Hathor to Ptah of Memphis.³ Ptah is the central figure in the renowned document of the Memphis theology, or rather mythology, in which the world is said to have been created because the thought that entered the heart of the god was spoken by his tongue.⁴ In later fragments of this myth, Hathor is said to have been present when Ptah performed his act of creation. The passage in question runs as follows: "... [Hathor] the mistress of the sycamore was with him."⁵ This fragmentary sentence must mean that Hathor assisted Ptah during the creation. Elsewhere Hathor acts as his daughter, whom he visits in her quality of 'mistress of the sycamore' in her sanctuary to the south of Memphis.⁶ A number of instances can be cited when Hathor and Ptah were jointly worshipped, as in Memphis, in Medinet Habu and on the Sinai.⁷ The association between the two godheads does not give the impression of being a close one. It can probably be attributed to the fact that from early times Hathor was worshipped as tree-goddess at Memphis. Its ideological justification was that both godheads were cosmogonic powers. Therefore it is not surprising that Hathor attended Ptah's act of creation.

Ptah, who in a certain sense is also an earth-god, forms an apt transition from the gods of the light-myth to the gods of the vegetation-myth. The central figure here is Osiris. Hathor's relationship to him

¹ MARIETTE, *Description générale*, p. 131.

² MARIETTE, *op. cit.* p. 100; Dendérah, I 39 d.

³ BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 54/5.

⁴ K. SETHE, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen*, 1928, p. 1 sq.; H. JUNKER, *Die Götterlehre von Memphis* (Schabaka-Inschrift) (Abh. der preuss. Ak. d. wiss. 1939, phil.-hist. klasse 23); *Die politische Lehre von Memphis*, 1941.

⁵ W. ERICHSEN und S. SCHOTT, *Fragmente memphitischer Theologie in demotischer Schrift*, 1954, p. 13, 51.

⁶ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *op. cit.* p. 192.

⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 191 sq.

is not very transparent. It means little that later Hathor took over Isis's task of rearing Horus on the island of Chemnis and of protecting him against the assaults of Seth. This is not an original idea.¹ Of greater value is the Osiris sanctuary on the roof of the Hathor temple at Dendera. It proves that in essence there was a similarity between the two gods, their promotion of fertility. However, one gets the impression that both were such imposing divine personalities that they respected and left intact each other's position and character. Through Osiris Hathor apparently also came to be associated with Sokaris. When at the festival of this god his ship makes its circuit, Hathor's boat is one of the escorting vessels.²

Min occupies a very special place in the group of vegetation divinities, and reference might be made to Hathor's association with this divinity as far back as the prehistoric era (see II C). The later history of religion says nothing of this association. Nevertheless urns dating from the 18th dynasty and bearing the Hathor cow as emblem have been found in the Min temple at Koptos.³ The liaison was therefore not completely severed. But in spite of all their spiritual affinity, these two gods are too independent and, by nature, too a-mythical to be forced into a system of gods.

In the Osiris myth Thoth plays a prominent role, and with him Hathor is also associated. She and Thoth are together in the sun-boat.⁴ At Hermopolis magna, where he resides, Thoth is accompanied by *Nḥm* 'w ȝj, 'she who saves the unfortunate'. This goddess has a sistrum on her head and is linked up with the local Hathor.⁵ The lines connecting Hathor and Thoth are therefore weak, and little wonder. Hathor and Thoth are counterparts. That is why they were chosen as the main figures in this study. In my opinion each represents one of the most important aspects of Egyptian religiosity, and together they embody the characteristic pathos of this ancient religion. This truth will gradually become manifest.

Hapi and Sothis together can form the bridge leading to the discussion of the goddesses found in the entourage of Hathor. Hapi is the Nile and

¹ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 277 sq.

² BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 89.

³ G.D. HORNBLOWER, "Predynastic Figures of Women and their Successors," *J.E.A.* Vol. XV, 1929, p. 45.

⁴ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 44.

⁵ JÉQUIER, *Considérations etc.* II.

the god of the Nile, the river which brings fertility to Egypt when it annually overflows its banks. Hathor stimulates this process. In the temple of Dendera it is said of her that she 'makes Hapi come swiftly'. In the same text from which this quotation is taken, ¹ Hathor is called *Špdw*. Elsewhere she appears in the shape of *Špdw*. ² This is the star Sirius, called Sothis by the Greeks. Its heliacal rising predicted the coming inundation. The Egyptians apparently ascribed the inundation of the Nile to the appearance of Sirius. The association of Hathor as goddess of fertility with Sirius is logical. Here again is clearly demonstrated what the implication is of such an association and even identification. Hathor is not really identical with Sirius, but in Sirius she reveals a sector of her activities.

Certain goddesses affiliated to Hathor scarcely need be discussed, since they have already made their appearance (see II D e). This is the case with Nut and *Mḥt wr.t*. In a certain respect this applies to Tefnet as well, the savage goddess who was pacified and brought from Nubia to Egypt. In Chapter II D f we saw how Hathor as sun-eye was identified with Tefnet. ³ This identification is neither artificial nor accidental. Like Tefnet, Hathor can become enraged and must then be pacified, as we have seen above. This explains why, on the other hand, Hathor was thought to be identical with *Wps*, 'the beautiful shape of Tefnet', or in other words the appearance of the goddess whose rage has cooled down and who is benevolent. ⁴

A remarkable relationship is that of Hathor with Jusas and with Nebet-Hetepet, who has already been introduced in Chapter II D b and the beginning of this chapter. Jusas is a wan mythological figure whose role was that of Re's partner. Nebet-Hetepet is 'the hand of the divinity', a figuration of the hand of the sun-god who created Shu and Tefnet by an act of masturbation. It was to their relationship with the great Hathor that these two goddesses owed their moderate popularity. Jusas is held to be the mother of the sun-god and Nebet-Hetepet his daughter. ⁵ The identification of the goddesses with Hathor once more illustrates the dual relationship between the goddess and the sun-god referred to above.

¹ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, I 65 a.

² *Op. cit.* I 54 b.

³ H. JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende*, Kaiserl. Ak. der Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften, 59 Band, 1 und 2 Abhandlung, p. 109; JÉQUIER, *Considérations etc.* V 4.

⁴ JUNKER, *op. cit.* p. 110.

⁵ VANDIER, *Iousás et (Hathor)-Nébet-Hétepet*.

An important relationship is that between Hathor and Ma-a-t. During the passage of the sun-god through the realm of the dead, these two goddesses are present in his boat.¹ Together they safeguard the ship on its dangerous voyage through the nether-world. In the Coffin Texts it is said that Hathor lives from Ma-a-t and is even assimilated with her.² This identification is carried so far in the temple at Dendera that Hathor is addressed as Ma-a-t.³ It is definitely not accidental that, in this temple, the king repeatedly next to all sorts of naturalia, makes the ma-a-t offer to Hathor. The ma-a-t offer is the supreme one, possessing symbolic significance, for the offerer hereby testifies that he wishes to live in conformity with the world order personified by Ma-a-t.⁴ Now the inevitable question is: what is the common factor between Hathor and Ma-a-t, two goddesses of seemingly contradistinctive natures? Hathor is the motive force of exuberant, divine life; Ma-a-t is the patroness of truth, justice, the inviolable world order. The relationship becomes clearer when we learn that Ma-a-t is also praised as 'the mistress of the north wind, who opens the nostrils of the living and gives wind to the god in his ship'. She is also called 'the throat that commands the viands', that is the throat from which comes the creative word that produces the viands.⁵ Ma-a-t, the world order, was not the modern scientific idea of a causality in nature, but the order of divine life creative in wisdom. That is why these two goddesses could be associated. Their relationship expresses the idea that Hathor the versatile also resembles Ma-a-t in a certain respect.

Pursuing this train of thought, it is fitting to mention that in the temple of Dendera Hathor is associated with Seshat, the goddess of the art of writing.⁶ Hathor therefore bears the honorary title of 'queen of writing, mistress of the book, the one who commands the written word.'⁷ Seshat is the consort of Thoth. We shall become better acquainted with her in the chapter on this god. The point at issue here is the reason for the liaison between Hathor and Seshat. The answer must be that the ancient Egyptian believed writing to be a mysterious activity, a great art, an expression of creative faculty. It is not strange that to Hathor,

¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*. p. 43.

² *BiOr*, jrg. XV, N° 5. Sept. 1958: article Drioton.

³ MARIETTE, *Description*, p. 330; Dendérah, II 62 a.

⁴ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*. p. 77 sq.

⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 51, 42.

⁶ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II 63 a, b.

⁷ *Op. cit.* II 63a.

so 'resourceful' because of her dynamic nature, was also ascribed this capacity.

Isis and Nephthys, two goddesses with whom Hathor had a special relationship, must certainly not be forgotten. It is evident that Hathor and Isis, the two great goddesses, had to come closer together. This appears to have happened at an early age.¹ In any event these two goddesses are almost inseparable in the temple of Dendera. At times it would seem that the difference between them has been obliterated. Nevertheless in this respect, too, Hathor retains her originality: now and then Isis wears the headdress she took from Hathor²; through Hathor as goddess of the dead Isis was associated with the West; through Hathor — and Nut — Isis acquired cosmic features.³ Hathor and Nephthys are related because both fulfil a funerary role. Nephthys bestowed great care on the body of her murdered brother; Hathor guards over the salvation of the dead. Moreover Nephthys here, too, follows in the footsteps of her more resolute sister.

Finally it is interesting and illuminating to note the curious fashion in which the Egyptians compared Hathor with the goddesses Sechmet and Bast. They said: "Hathor is as wrathful as Sechmet and as joyful as Bast."⁴ Sechmet is the martial, irascible lion-goddess of Memphis. Bast, the patroness of Bubastis, could also be savage-minded but in this quotation shows the cheerful, friendly side of her nature which made her so loved.⁵ This qualification of Hathor admirably expresses the polarity of her being.

The conclusion in brief: the relationships between Hathor and the above-mentioned gods and goddesses were sometimes coincidental, but mainly they convey a certain affinity of temperament. However, we must not be tempted into thinking that these associations and even identifications imply that Hathor is absolutely identical with the divinities in question. To the Egyptian way of thinking these relationships mean that, in certain respects, Hathor resembles a number of goddesses and acts in a fashion akin to that of certain gods. In actual fact, however, she is in essence incomparable and striking.

¹ MARIA MÜNSTER, *Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis*, p. 90.

² FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 44.

³ MARIA MÜNSTER, *op. cit.* p. 105, 198.

⁴ C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 1951; p. 309.

⁵ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 643 sq.; 277 sq.

G. MYTHOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS

Gradually a picture of Hathor has emerged. She is a dynamic, independent personality. Her nature is a-mythical in the sense that, apart from the myth about the saving of mankind that really is related to Re in the first place, there are no mythical stories attached to her figure. Still she has not escaped the fate of being woven into certain mythological speculations.

In the previous chapter we saw how, in turn, Hathor was placed with Horus, Re, Ihy and Harsomtut in one of the family groups used by the Egyptians in an attempt to correlate their gods. If we pursue this line, we find that she can also be placed in the triad Ptah, Hathor, Imhotep.¹ Sometimes she appears in a sort of trinitarian formula in which three divinities, including Hathor, are the forms in which one single god appears.² In the temple at Dendera she receives the homage of the primeval gods of Hermopolis, with whom she is therefore associated,³ or the spirits of the stars and a number of allegorical figures pay their respects to her and to Horus.⁴ In this period Hathor became a sort of Egyptian panthea. The text lists the names under which she appears in the various cities,⁵ in other words these local goddesses are nothing more than figurations of the great Hathor.

Special attention is merited by the seven Hathors, who form a sort of college, have their own cultic places and act as servants of the great Hathor. The number seven is not arbitrary. It is a sacred number that connotes totality, perfection.⁶ They are seven and simultaneously a complete unity. The seven Hathors appear at the birth of a child and predict the fate of the newly-born. In the famous story of "the prince and the destiny" they prophesy that the prince shall meet his death through a crocodile, a serpent or a dog. This prophesy, however, does not imply an inevitable fate, but rather designates three evil chances which can perhaps be avoided. The end of the story is missing, but presumably they are avoided because of the prince's courage, his trust

¹ SANDMAN HOMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 196.

² S. MORENZ, *Ägyptische Religion*, 1960. p. 270.

³ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II, 4, 5.

⁴ *Op. cit.* II 10, 11.

⁵ MARIETTE, *Description générale*, p. 119.

⁶ KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, p. 168, 258.

in God and the love and care of his wife.¹ The seven Hathors incorporate the warning voice that exhorts man to submit to the will of the divinity, in this case Hathor. They are the expression of Hathor's being and activity. She is the creative, divine life; whosoever wishes to avoid destruction must follow the direction of her 'élan vital', for this expresses her dispensation of destiny.

Later speculations did not stop at the seven Hathors. Mention is made of eighteen, forty-two, even three hundred and sixty-two forms of Hathor.² These artificial numbers probably conceal the fact that Hathor assimilated a large number of local female numina and at the same time expresses the longing of her venerators to acclaim the greatness of their goddess.

H) HATHOR'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

Originally the Egyptian gods were confined to the territory of the Nile Valley. Only later in the course of history did they become known and worshipped in other countries. The classic example of a goddess who acquired great renown outside Egypt is Isis. Yet her career as patroness of the mysteries named after her did not begin until the latter period of the history of Egyptian religion, in the Hellenistic era. It is therefore remarkable that Hathor should form an exception to this rule. At an early stage she was also popular beyond the Egyptian frontiers. Therefore there is every reason to trace her relations with foreign countries. This, too, is a means of discovering a new aspect in her complex nature.

Already in the third millenium B.C. Hathor was identified with the local Semitic mother-goddess at Byblos.³ Hence her later appellation of 'mistress of Byblos', i.e. in the funerary texts.⁴ The Ba'alat Gebal, mistress of Byblos, with whom Hathor was identified, was the patroness of the shipmasters.⁵ Hathor likewise protects shipping on the Nile, to foreign parts and in the sky.⁶ Hathor did not borrow this function

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Die Idee des Schicksals in der altägyptischen Religion*, The Sacred Bridge, 1963, 112 sq.

² KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 410; H. BRUGSCH, *Religion und Mythologie der alten Aegypter*, 1891, p. 316 sq.

³ FL. F. HVIDBERG, *Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament*, 1962, p. 70.

⁴ S. MORENZ, *Ägyptische Religion*, 1960, p. 160; C.T. I 262 b.

⁵ A. ERMAN, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, 1934, p. 349.

⁶ R. MOFTAH, *Die uralte Sycomore*, 3.

from the goddess of Byblos. We have already seen her as pilot of the sun-ship, in which quality her title is 'mistress of the ship'.¹

The relationship between Hathor and the goddess of Byblos indicates early trading connections between Egypt and Syria which fell under the patronage of Hathor and which led to the said identification of the two goddesses. Hathor also escorted enterprising Egyptians on other voyages abroad, for example in their attempts to exploit the precious minerals of the inhospitable Sinai peninsula. A text gratefully testifies that Hathor made this laborious work succeed.² Stela of leaders of such expeditions to the Sinai contain prayers to Hathor.³ There are other indications that there was a regular Hathor cult on the Sinai. Since she provides the entrance to the sources of precious stones, she is called 'the mistress of the turquoise', 'the mistress of the lapis lazuli',⁴ 'the mistress of the malachite country'.⁵ So she became the patroness of all searches for precious metals and stones. In a room of the temple at Dendera twelve heads are portrayed which carry the hieroglyphic symbol of 'mountain'. They represent territories mentioned by name where the Egyptians could find the precious minerals so much desired by them.⁶

It was not only to eastern countries that Hathor accompanied those who placed themselves in her care. Her influence also spread out southwards. She had her sacred region at Abu Simbel in Nubia,⁷ where Ramses II built a temple for this goddess.⁸ She even had connections with the mysterious country of Punt, which produced the much-favoured incense. Hence she is called both 'the mistress of the incense' and 'the mistress of Punt'.⁹

It is remarkable that Hathor shares her connection with Punt with the god who was her partner back in prehistoric times, namely Min of Koptos. With respect to Min there are so many data suggestive of origins in the south in Punt that one is inclined to wonder whether Min is autochthonous in Egypt. That is an open question. In the historical

¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 43.

² J.B. PRITCARD, *A N E T*, 1955, p. 229.

³ *Les pèlerinages*, sources orientales III, 1960, p. 24.

⁴ ALLAM, *Hathorkult*, p. 77 sq.; SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 192.

⁵ B A R, I 715, 720, 722, 725, 738, 750.

⁶ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II 12.

⁷ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 281.

⁸ J. VANDIER, *La religion égyptienne*, "Mana" tome premier, 1949, p. 169.

⁹ MARIA MÜNSTER, *Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis*, p. 39; B A R II 252, 255, 288.

period in any case, Min is a typical Egyptian god.¹ As for Hathor, there are no grounds whatsoever for any such supposition. Right from the beginning she is a purely Egyptian goddess. Her relationship with Punt, indeed all her connections with foreign lands, are all the more illustrative of the extent of the region she covered with her expansive personality.

¹ BLEEKER, *Min*, p. 34-40.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CULT OF HATHOR

A. CULTIC LOCATIONS

The cult of Hathor must date from very ancient times, for the Palermo stone mentions offerings made to Hathor during the reigns of the kings of the fifth dynasty.¹ The goddess is supposed to come from the third nome of the delta, whose capital was called Momenphis in the Greek period and was located near present-day Kom el-Hisn.² In the historical era she was venerated here as cow-goddess under the name *Šhꜣt Hr*, meaning 'the one who remembers Horus',³ a remarkable title which must signify that she has not forgotten Horus and is concerned for him. In any case it is certain that since the Old Kingdom Hathor as goddess of the sycamore had a temple at Memphis to the north of the wall.⁴ Nothing is known of this temple. It is clear, however, that she was worshipped here as tree-goddess. On the west bank of the Nile at Thebes she also played an important role as goddess of the necropolis. Behind the 11th dynasty mausoleum of Mentuhotep was a chapel dedicated to Hathor, which was restored by Tuthmosis III of the 18th dynasty and in which the goddess is repeatedly depicted as cow-goddess.⁵ Moreover the adjacent temple of Hatsheput contains yet another Hathor sanctuary, in which the goddess appears either in an anthropomorphic form or as a cow.⁶ In the temple of Ptah on the other bank of the Nile at Karnak she was worshipped together with this god.⁷ Since Hathor was a particularly popular goddess, it is not surprising that her sanctuaries were located widespread throughout Egypt.

¹ B.A.R. I, 156, 159.

² BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 277.

³ K. SETHE, *Urgeschichte und älteste Religion der Ägypter*, p. 67.

⁴ ALLAM, *Hathorkult*, p. 3 sq.; MARIA MÜNSTER, *Isis*, p. 184.

⁵ E. NAVILLE, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, Part I, pl. XXVIII, XX, XXIII, XXVII, XXIX, XXX, XXI, Part. III, pl. VIII, IX, XV, XXX, XXXI, XXXLL.

⁶ E. NAVILLE, *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari*, IV pl. LXXXVIII, LXXXIX, XC, XCI, XCII, XCIII, XCIV, XCVI, XCVII, XCIX, C, CII, CIV, CV, CVI.

⁷ SANDMAN HOMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 191.

S. ALLAM has gone to some trouble to collect relevant data on this matter in his monograph. In addition to the five main centres of the Hathor cult which are the subject of this study, he mentions nine others.¹ As the information available concerning these is not very eloquent, they may be ignored. It may be remembered that Hathor was also worshipped beyond the Egyptian frontiers, namely at Byblos, in the Sinai mountains and in the vicinity of Abu Simbel (II, H).

Three of the five centres of the Hathor cult which are more colourfully depicted by the data are the aforementioned Memphis, the necropolis of Thebes and the Sinai.² The remaining two are Kusae and Dendera. The writer AELIANUS relates that at Kusae was a temple dedicated to Aphrodite Urania where a sacred cow was worshipped.³ A tablet has been found which informs us that Ptolemy I founded this sanctuary or probably embellished it,⁴ for Kusae must have been an ancient location of the Hathor cult. Evidence of the role played by Hathor in the cult of the dead is to be found in the graves at Meir dating from the Middle Kingdom (II D d).

Thanks to the fact that the beautiful Hathor temple at Dendera has for the main part escaped spoliation, it is possible to form some idea of the manner in which this goddess was worshipped at the daily service and on festive occasions. This imposing sanctuary, the construction of which was completed under the last of the Ptolemaic monarchs, stands at a place where, from the very beginning of Egyptian history, Hathor was worshipped. An inscription states that even under King Cheops (4th Dynasty) there was a temple on this site.⁵ A complete description of the present temple would not only far exceed the scope of this treatise, but would add little to the information given by existing literature on the construction and the mural decorations of this building.⁶ The present study allows of no elaboration on the interior structure of the temple and the interrelationship of the reliefs in the chambers and passages. Yet it is both useful and necessary to give a concise description of the temple in this section. The reason is that every Egyptologist who visits these temple ruins wonders what the

¹ ALLAM, *op. cit.* p. 90 sq.

² *Op. cit.* p. 3 sq.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 25.

⁴ P.M. FRASER, "A Temple of Hathor at Kusae," *J.E.A.* 42, 1956, p. 97 sq.

⁵ J. ZANDER, *Ägyptische Tempels in göden*, 1965, p. 131.

⁶ MARIETTE, *Description générale etc.*; Baedeker *Ägyptens*, 1928, p. 253 sq.; ERMANN, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, p. 368 sq.

purpose was of the chambers and spaces he walks through. Usually he finds no answer to this question and so must add it to the other insoluble problems. More recent investigations have demonstrated, however, that for these later temples at least it is possible to discover the inter-relationship between the reliefs and, based on this, to deduce what sacred acts must have accompanied the scenes depicted.¹ Ph. DERCHAIN even speaks of "le grammaire du temple".² Some knowledge of the structure of this temple is needed to understand more fully the tenor of the Hathor cult and hence the goddess herself.

The temple area is entered through the tall propylon. Within the encircling wall are located, in addition to the Hathor temple with which we are primarily concerned, a number of other buildings including the so-called 'mammisis' or 'birth-houses'. Their meaning is dealt with later in another context. From the open courtyard the interested visitor passes on first to the pronaos or vestibule, called *hntj*. The roof is supported by six rows of four tall pillars, whose capitals are ornamented with a Hathor-head that bears a sistrum in the shape of a naos. The underlying idea of the structure of the temple can be deduced from the ornamentation of the ceiling, on which are astronomic representations of, inter alia, the sky-goddess Nut and the astral constellations. Apparently the roof represents the firmament and so expresses the idea that the earthly residence of Hathor, who was known as a sky-goddess, must be a reflection of her cosmic residence.

Behind the vestibule lies a smaller room with six pillars which is called the 'hall of the appearance' (*wšh.t h'j*), because here the goddess 'appeared' when she was carried outside in her boat during processions. To the right of the entrance is portrayed how, supervised by Hathor, the King performs the ritual of the foundation of the temple. With a hoe he loosens the ground, stakes out the area of the future temple, shapes bricks and piles them up. On either side of this hall are three chambers which were set aside for cultic purposes. Here, for example, were prepared the perfume and ointment and the offers for the goddess. The first room on the right was the treasure-room where the precious stones and the golden and silver ornaments of Hathor were stored.

Next the visitor must pass through two forecourts, the offer room (*wšh.t htp.t*) and the central room (*wšh.t hr jb*), to reach the heart of the

¹ E. WINTER, *Untersuchungen zu den ägyptischen Tempelreliefs der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, 1968.

² Quotation in WINTER, *Untersuchungen*, p. 14.

temple. Here lies the sanctuary, an oblong room shrouded in darkness and thus symbolic of the mysterious nature of the divinity. It was probably here that the sacred boats of the diverse gods worshipped in this temple were stored, in the first place of Hathor and Horus and perhaps also of Isis and Harsomtus. This naos is surrounded by a passageway giving on to a number of adjoining rooms which have a mythological significance. Mention might be made of some of these. To the left and next each other are the 'room of the rebirth' (*whm hpr*) and 'the place of the birth' (of the goddess) (*š.t mšhn.t*). There is a room dedicated to the sistrum and another one called after the *mnj.t*. There are rooms for water and for fire. Sokaris, identified with Osiris, and Re each have a room. Along the axis of the temple lies a room that may be designated the most sacred of them all. It contains an image of Hathor, or rather a fetish of this goddess placed in a niche in the rear wall. Evidently there was no special image of the goddess, instead there were several which, in the cult, were dressed in ritual fashion. A room on the left of the central chamber was used as dressing room. Another room worthy of attention is the one which is a sort of sanctum sanctorum. This is the New Year chapel where the priests and the effigy of the goddess congregated to celebrate the New Year festival. On either side of the central chamber is a staircase leading to the roof. The graphic descriptions of the priestly processions along these staircases fire the imagination and describe how, at certain festivals, colourful processions mounted the one staircase and, after performing the prescribed ceremonies, descended the other staircase. On the roof is a little Hathor chapel and a temple of Osiris. Twelve crypts are built into the walls and the foundations of the rear and side walls. These were secret, hermetically closed storerooms where the divine effigies and cultic objects were kept. These crypts must have had an ideological significance in addition to their practical use. They were the expression of the unfathomable character of the godhead, for of them it was said that they were rooms "of which no stranger knows the contents and of which the entrances are hidden."¹ This brief description of the interior of the temple is all I wish to give, but it is enough to give some idea of the pregnant structure of this magnificent edifice. If we give free rein to our imagination and in the mind's eye see how the walls of all the chambers, rooms and crypts are decorated with reliefs of mythological or cultic scenes which usually pertain directly to the meaning and

¹ ERMAN, *op. cit.* p. 371.

purpose of the room in question, then we really become fascinated by the power and influence of the goddess to whom this sanctuary was dedicated. Finally mention might be made of the little Isis temple behind the Hathor temple and of the sacred pool next to the great temple.

Needless to say in all Hathor temples including that of Dendera priests were employed, sometimes only a few, sometimes a great many, as presumably at Dendera. They are repeatedly referred to in the texts.¹ The priestly office evidently passed down from father to son.² Hathor was served preferably by women, and royal princesses led the way in this pious religious service.³ Recent research has made us better acquainted with the priests and priestesses who served at Dendera from the time of King Khéphren to the end of the First Intermediate Period.⁴ For the rest little is known of the hierarchy or the specific duties of the diverse Hathor priests and priestesses.⁵ These probably corresponded to the official activities of the other Egyptian priests.⁶

B) THE DAILY CULT

Familiarity with the interior of the Hathor temple at Dendera and some degree of imagination are sufficient to form an idea of the religious service performed daily in the sanctuary of the goddess. The written ritual of this daily cult is, however, not extant. Nevertheless we may safely assume that the worship proceeded roughly according to the pattern of the ritual of the daily cult in the Egyptian temples.⁷ This is not a rash supposition. Certain representations in the temple of Dendera show how the king performs a series of cultic acts according to a scheme somewhat similar to that of the said ritual. Additional information is provided by the accompanying texts.⁸ We see how the king — in actual fact the high priest who represents him — climbs the three steps in front of the naos, breaks the clay seal of the door,

¹ ALLAM, *op. cit.* passim.

² B.A.R. I p. 213 sq.

³ ALLAM, *op. cit.* p. 14.

⁴ H.G. FISCHER, *Dendera in the third Millenium B.C. down to the Theben Domination of Upper Egypt*, 1968, Chapter III, A, Priest and Priestesses.

⁵ MARIETTE, *Description*, p. 306.

⁶ A. ERMAN-H. RANKE, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, 1922, p. 330 sq.; BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 413, 596; S. SAUNERON, *Les prêtres de l'ancienne Égypte*, 1967

⁷ A. MORET, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte*, 1912.

⁸ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, II, 64 sq.

opens the door of the naos, looks upon the goddess and pays homage to her. He is depicted burning incense in front of the boats of Hathor, Horus, Isis and Harsomtus. Furthermore scenes are found throughout the temple which depict the king making offers to the goddess. These offers, which were presumably made daily, consisted of naturalia, the sistrum and the *mnj.t* as well as Ma-a-t. The last-mentioned was the supreme offer¹: it stands for the idea that Ma-a-t, on which the god lives, has been achieved in the land thanks to the king's rule. The texts say this expressis verbis: "Ma-a-t is offered to thee, O, Ma-a-t in Dendera, Ma-a-t is called thy *k3*." ² To the king who makes the Ma-a-t offer to Hathor the goddess says: "I give thee this land endowed with life, each mouth filled with Ma-a-t." ³ The main service was held in the morning and consisted befittingly of a rich ritual. The afternoon and evening services were of a simpler style. Thanks to the research done by M. ALLIOT not only on the festivals of Horus of Edfu but also on the daily cult celebrated in the said city, we can form a good picture of the way in which the gods were worshipped in the latter days of the history of the Egyptian religion. What took place at Edfu can, *mutatis mutandis*, hold good for Dendera as well. ⁴

ALLIOT distinguishes the following elements in the daily morning service: (a) bringing in the water; (b) introduction of the offer; (c) purification of the offer; (d) consecration of the offer; (e) daily service at the sanctuary, i.e. (1) the first entrance (in the sanctuary) during which the following rituals were performed: preliminary rituals, revelation of the countenance of the god, gazing upon it and paying homage to the god; (2) the second entrance which embodied the meal of the god, the toilet of the god and finally the purification rituals; (f) the service held in the temple whilst the high priest was engaged in the sanctuary; (g) the bringing outside of the offers. ⁵ The afternoon and evening services followed a simpler pattern in which certain features of the morning service recurred. A highlight of the cult was apparently the unveiling of the countenance of the god and the contemplation of his beauty. This privilege was reserved for the pharaoh, or the priest who deputed for him, and was considered an initiation into a secret. Thus a text at

¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*. p. 77 sq.

² MARIETTE, *op. cit.* II, 3

³ *Op. cit.* I, 40b.

⁴ M. ALLIOT. *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, I, II, 1949.

⁵ *Op. cit.* I, p. 1-195.



1. The Hathor Cow. (E. Naville, *The XIth Dynasty Temple, Part I*, 1907, Pl. XXXI).

opens the door of the naos, looks upon the goddess and pays homage to her. He is depicted burning incense in front of the boats of Hathor, Horus, Isis and Harsomtus. Furthermore scenes are found throughout the temple which depict the king making offers to the goddess. These offers, which were presumably made daily, consisted of naturalia, the sistrum and the *mnj.t* as well as Ma-a-t. The last-mentioned was the supreme offer¹: it stands for the idea that Ma-a-t, on which the god lives, has been achieved in the land thanks to the king's rule. The texts say this expressis verbis: "Ma-a-t is offered to thee, O, Ma-a-t in Dendera, Ma-a-t is called thy *k3*." ² To the king who makes the Ma-a-t offer to Hathor the goddess says: "I give thee this land endowed with life, each mouth filled with Ma-a-t." ³ The main service was held in the morning and consisted befittingly of a rich ritual. The afternoon and evening services were of a simpler style. Thanks to the research done by M. ALLIOT not only on the festivals of Horus of Edfu but also on the daily cult celebrated in the said city, we can form a good picture of the way in which the gods were worshipped in the latter days of the history of the Egyptian religion. What took place at Edfu can, *mutatis mutandis*, hold good for Dendera as well. ⁴

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¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*. p. 77 sq.

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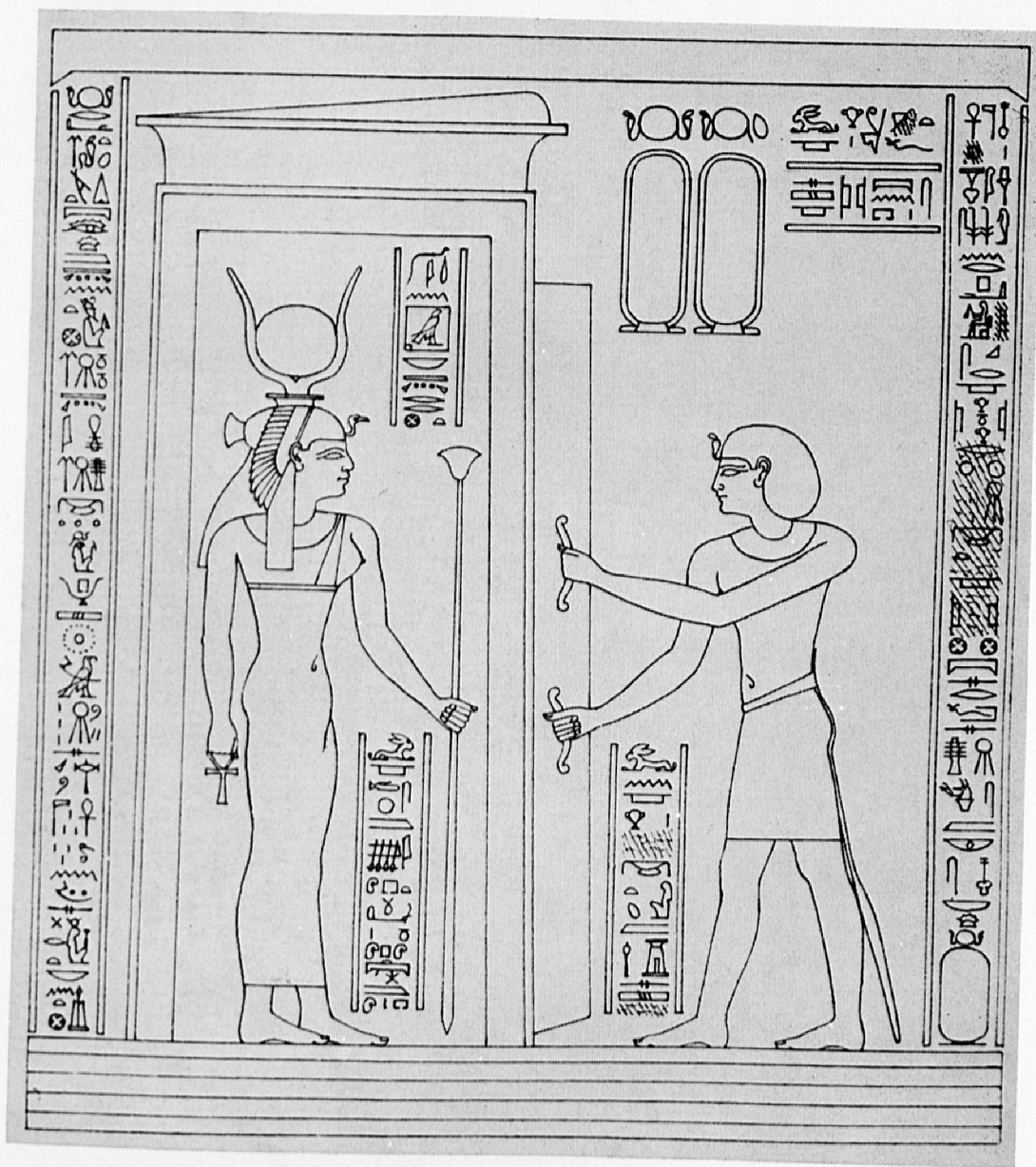
³ *Op. cit.* I, 40b.

⁴ M. ALLIOT. *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, I, II, 1949.

⁵ *Op. cit.* I, p. 1-195.



I. The Hathor Cow. (E. Naville, *The XIth Dynasty Temple*, Part I, 1907, Pl. XXXI).



II. The Pharaoh opens the shrine of Hathor. (A. Mariette, Denerah, II, 1870, Pl. 64a).

Dendera says: "the gateway to go to the secret place, in order to see the Golden One (Hathor)." ¹

The question is what is meant by "secret" in this passage. ² Obviously the Egyptian temple rituals were not mysteries in the Hellenistic sense of the word, i.e. ceremonies known only to adepts (initiates). There is not a trace of closed societies which possessed esoteric wisdom in ancient Egypt. Everyone was acquainted with the rituals celebrated in the temple, but not everyone was privileged to witness them. Indeed the temple was not the meeting place of the believers, but the dwelling of the divinity to whom homage was paid in the name of the people by the pharaoh as high priest, accompanied by a select band of priests and high officials, whereupon the godhead promised him and his subjects certain favours. What took place in the temple was therefore 'secret', and in a double sense. Firstly because of the closed nature of the cult which was celebrated in the innermost part of the temple. The structure of the Ptolemaic temples at Dendera and Edfu accentuated this feature of the service. Once the gateway of the high encircling wall was closed, no one could observe what was happening inside. A peculiarity of the structure of these temples, indicative of the deeper significance of the 'secret' of certain cultic acts, was the semi-darkness of certain chambers and the complete absence of light in others, for example the sanctuary. This twilight, this darkness evoked the idea of the imponderability of the god's being. Accordingly there were rituals that were 'secret' in the sense that it was forbidden to speak of them or to enact them publicly, even though these rituals were known and, in the course of time, were made accessible to more people. Consequently the texts contain a repeated assurance that the person in question knows certain mysteries but will safely preserve them. ³ In order to comprehend fully the Egyptian cult, and also that of Hathor, it should be added that, in addition to the 'secret' rituals, public cultic ceremonies were celebrated in which the entire population could participate. These festivals were the occasion of the 'appearance' of the divinity, the processions in which the image of the divinity was carried and appeared before the people. In the section on the festivals which celebrated Hathor, the significance of these processions will be dealt with at greater length.

¹ MARIETTE, *op. cit.*, II, 24b; CHASSINAT, *Dendéra*, I, 76.

² C.J. BLEEKER, *Initiation in Ancient Egypt*, Initiation, 1965; *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 45 sq.

³ See f.i. E. CHASSINAT, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak*, I, 1966, p. 11/12.

C) PERSONAL VENERATION

This rather summary sketch of the daily cult can be supplemented by the testimonials of personal veneration provided by a number of texts. It is evident from these sources that the goddess was very popular and greatly loved.

Proof of this is to be found, firstly, in the personal names formed by a compound with Hathor.¹ They originated in the desire to place the person in question under the patronage of Hathor. Furthermore other people rejoice in the fact that they have been permitted to take part in the Hathor festivals and have thus beheld the goddess, apparently when the image of the goddess was carried in procession outside the precincts of the temple. Testimonials of this are the following exclamations: "Fortunate the ones who have taken part in the festival of Hathor."² "How happy is he who contemplates Hathor."³

Above all, however, there are a number of beautiful songs which provide information on the personal veneration of the goddess by male and female followers. They speak of the sincere admiration, the intimate attachment and the great faith cherished for Hathor. These hymns are very important, for they provide insight into the personal piety of the Egyptians. As is well enough known, the religiosity of the individual in ancient Egypt is almost completely obscured by the manifestations of the state cult. Even in the funerary papyri, the personal belief of the subject is scarcely mentioned. The exception to this rule are the texts of the memorial stones in the Theban necropolis, which were studied by A. ERMAN and B. GUN and which, as GUN puts it, voice "The Religion of the Poor."⁴ The Hathor hymns are so important as sources of information, because their composers did not belong to 'the Poor' and consequently these hymns tell us what the religious feelings were of the better educated. It is even possible to distil from these hymns an idea of how the poets conceived of Hathor. This picture is composed of certain main themes of religious life, namely (1) the character of the goddess; (2) the relationship between the individual and Hathor; (3)

¹ H. TE VELDE, *Seth, God of Confusion*, 1967, p. 135.

² *BiOr*, XV, No 5, Sept. 1958, article E. DRIOTON.

³ E. DRIOTON. *Pages d'Égyptologie*, 1957, p. 128.

⁴ A. ERMAN, *Denksteine aus der thebanischen Gräberwelt*, Sitzungsber. der Berl. Ak. der Wiss., 1911, p. 1086 sq.; B. GUN, "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt" *J.E.A.* Volume III, p. 8 sq.

Hathor's function in the cult; (4) her role in civic life. Since a study of this subject by the author has already been published, suffice it here to summarise briefly the main results of that investigation.¹

With respect to Hathor's character, what impresses the reader of these hymns most is the reverence felt for this mighty goddess. As one poet says :

"Worship Hathor, the Lady of Dendera, in all lands,
for she is the mistress of fear,
Worship Hathor, the Lady of Dendera, in all lands,
for she despatches the gods of vengeance against the foe."²

But gratefulness for her benevolence is also voiced. In particular gratefulness for the blessing of children which she bestows. Thus a poet exhorts the worship of Hathor :

"so that the goddess lets your wives
bear sons and daughters,
so that they may not be barren
and you may not be impotent."³

Hathor is so popular because she loves gaiety and is very fond of festivities. One poet praises her as follows :

"Thou art the mistress of jubilation, the queen of the dance,
The mistress of music, the queen of the harp-playing,
The lady of the choral dance, the queen of wreath-weaving,
The mistress of inebriety without end."⁴

Uninhibitedly man turns to Hathor, for she is a merciful goddess. She hears and answers the prayers of those in need and discharges their guilt.⁵

The last deed of the goddess characterises her attitude towards her adherents. She is a merciful deity. They turn by preference to her as goddess of love, amongst other things to have their amorous longings requited. This theme has already been discussed in a previous section (II D c). We have also seen that it is the ardent desire of the deceased to be admitted to Hathor's retinue and to perform certain services for her (II D d)

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, "Der religiöse Gehalt einiger Hathorlieder," *Z.Ä.S.* (in Memory of S. Morenz).

² H. JUNKER, "Poesie der Spätzeit" *Z.Ä.S.* 45, 1906.

³ S. SCHOTT, *Altägyptische Liebeslieder*, 1950, p. 82/3.

⁴ JUNKER, *op. cit.*

⁵ SCHOTT, *op. cit.* p. 83/4; C.T. V 272b-273d.

As for the cult of Hathor, what strikes every reader is the note of optimistic joy sounded by the poet when he sings of participation in her festivals. Enthusiasm surges forth from the song :

“There comes wine together with the Golden One,
And fills thy house with joy,
Live in intoxication day and night without end,
Be happy and carefree,
Whilst male and female singers rejoice and dance,
To prepare for thee a beautiful day.”¹

The Egyptian did not lightly participate in the service of Hathor, as is testified by the words inscribed above the door of the temple of Edfu, which may certainly be held to apply to the cult of Hathor as well: “Everyone who enters this gateway, beware of entering in impurity, for god loves purity more than a thousandfold treasures, more than a thousandfold of fine gold... come not in sin, enter not in impurity, speak no lie in his house.”²

It is only very exceptionally that the hymns composed as personal eulogy or cultic song speak of the role played by Hathor in civic life. Mention has already been made of the song that accompanies the dance of the pharaoh (II D h). From it may be concluded that the pharaoh clearly realised that he must take account of the mighty Hathor, for she is, indeed, a royal goddess (II D g). An unexpected testimonial of her influence in state affairs is to be found in the story of the return of Sinuhe. In it the royal children sing a hymn and offer the pharaoh their necklaces while praying that Hathor might bless the pharaoh, and the purpose was to make him favourably inclined toward the return of Sinuhe from abroad.³

D) FESTIVALS

In the course of the ages, the number of festivals in ancient Egypt increased considerably.⁴ Their number became so large that on a well-known festival calendar almost half of the year was devoted to festive days. Naturally Hathor, too, celebrated her festivals. The

¹ SCHOTT, *op. cit.* p. 130.

² H.W. FAIRMAN, *Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple*, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol. 37, 1954/5, p. 197 sq.

³ A. DE BUCK, *Egyptische Verhalen*, 1928, p. 66.

⁴ BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 32.

testimonial of this is the great calendar of Dendera,¹ which mentions Hathor festivals on the following days : 1, 2, 9, 20 Thoth, 5 Paophi, 26 Khoiak, 9, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30 Tybi, 1, 2, 3, 21 Mechir, the new moon of Pharmuthi, and the 28th of that month, 11 and 15 Pachon, 27, 28, 29, 30 Payni, the New Moon of Epiphi, 1 and 27 Mesore and the fourth intercalary day. Some of these festivals bore her personal mark, at others she honoured the festivities with her presence.

The Hathor festivals must go back to the very remote past of ancient Egypt. A goddess who was patroness of the dance, music and song undoubtedly encouraged frequent and festive worship of her personality. Information about these festivals and their dates is, however, scarce as regards the earliest period. In his study on "Altägyptische Festdaten" (1930), S. SCHOTT mentions the festival of the 'voyage of Hathor' in Khoiak (p. 89) and a ceremony on the eve of a Hathor festival at Thebes on 30 Epiphi (p. 110). From the name of the third month of the season of inundation, called Hathyr, it may be concluded that the month dedicated to this goddess was a festive one. Further reference might be made to the observations on the dance in Section II D h. There it was noted that already in the Old Kingdom Hathor was honoured with demonstrations of the art of dancing, that in the Middle Kingdom the dance for Hathor formed a component of the funerary cult though it also was obviously of an erotic nature, and that in the New Kingdom dances were performed at the *šd* festival and also at a festival with a funerary tint called 'the beautiful festival of the desert valley'. These fragmentary data suggest that many Hathor festivals were celebrated in all periods in Egypt. However, it is only in the Ptolemaic temples that detailed festival calendars are found which contain statements about the celebration of Hathor festivals, though regrettably these yield much less information than one would wish.

The Egyptian festivals constitute such a difficult subject of research, because of the lacunae and numerous question marks surrounding the data available. To acquire some degree of mastery over this material, particularly as regards the Hathor festivals, certain general observations must be made :

(1) It goes without saying that the festivals were usually celebrated in or around the temples. They were composed either of rituals performed in the intimacy of the sanctuary, or of processions during which the divinity was made manifest to the festive populace. Often these

¹ MARIETTE, *Dendérah* I, 62.

festivals were very local in character. With respect to Hathor, one typical festival forms an exception to this rule, because it was not attached to any particular temple and, moreover, was of more general significance, albeit that its celebration must have been confined to the Delta region of the Nile. This was the festival of the plucking of the papyrus for Hathor (*sšš wꜥḏ.w n Ht-Hr*).

(2) The above-mentioned distinction between cultic acts performed in public and other rituals concealed from the public eye merits our attention. In general the common people had no chance of following the ceremonies that took place in the temple. This was also true of certain festivals such as the New Year's Festival.¹ At others, on the contrary, the people were fully involved and could celebrate the festival to their heart's content. Many of the processions of Hathor offered ample opportunity to do so. Processions of Hathor: this term suggests the notion that the goddess appeared in person to the people. What actually happened was that her effigy was carried about. Still the expression is neither inept nor inaccurate, for the Egyptian firmly believed that the gods were in continuous possession of their effigies. The texts state literally that Hathor united with her effigy.² Her image was not an arbitrary or fanciful representation of her personality, but was part of her being. In a procession she therefore, in a certain sense, appeared in person. The procession itself, the so-called *pr.t* or exodus, also possessed a deeper significance than the mere display of the divine image. It was an epiphany, an appearance of the deity who revealed her being to her adherents. The realisation of this deeper significance of the procession of Hathor's effigy is necessary to comprehend fully the pronouncements cited in III C, in which people express their great joy at having been privileged to behold Hathor.

(3) There are two circumstances that are obstacles in the way of forming a lucid picture of the Hathor festivals. These are (a) the annalistic nature of a great deal of the annotations of the festival calendars and (b) the contradictions between certain calendars and certain local traditions. With respect to the first point, numerous statements in the calendars have very little value, because they are too summary to add to a better understanding of these festivals, even though they sound so enigmatically interesting. For instance a couple of texts state that, amidst other goddesses, Hathor took part in a procession of Sokaris and

¹ M. ALLIOT, *Le culte d'Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées*, 1954, p. 559.

² *Op. cit.* p. 488

evidently dominated therein. Further indication of the nature of the procession, or of the relationship between Hathor and Sokaris, is, completely lacking.¹ Consequently there is no point in cataloguing such facts. With regard to the second point, it can be seen that in the great festival calendar of Dendera certain festivals are missing which occur in other texts.² Besides, in order to obtain a complete survey account must be taken of the festivals which were celebrated for the crypts,³ and also of those held in the mammisis.⁴ The purpose of this study cannot possibly be to treat of all this material. Here only those festivals are relevant which illuminate the character of Hathor.

(4) One cannot but wonder to what extent the information provided by the Ptolemaic texts is significant for the Hathor festivals as such. On this the following might be noted: bearing in mind the religious conservatism of the Egyptians, it is not presumptuous to project into the past the picture obtained from these more eloquent texts. Then there are sufficient grounds for assuming that Hathor was always celebrated in this manner, though the earlier festivities would have been of a more sober tone.

(5) It is perhaps useful to note that outside Dendera, the centre of the Hathor cult, magnificent festivals were celebrated in honour of the goddess in both earlier and later times. The festival calendar of Esna, for example, states that on 30 Tybi and 14 Payni a festival was organised for Hathor, the Lady of Agny, whilst for 29 Athyr is recorded a festival for the goddess Nebtu which is equivalent to a Hathor festival.⁵ One would dearly like to know what happened at these festivals. On this the calendar preserves absolute silence. Equally lacking in colour is the statement that at the temple of Sesostris II at El-Lahun a festival of the voyage of Hathor was held.⁶ Further details are lacking. Fortunately this festival is also mentioned in the calendar of Dendera, and, as will presently appear, we are able to unravel to some extent the purport of this festival with the aid of other sources. This is not the case with the visits paid by Ptah to Hathor who in this context is called his daughter, visits which must have had

¹ G.A. GABALLA-K.A. KITCHEN, *The Festival of Sokaris*, *Orientalia*, Vol. 38, Fasc. 1, 1969.

² MARIETTE, *Description*, p. 106.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 323.

⁴ R. DAUMAS, *Les mammisis des temples égyptiens*. 1958

⁵ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*.

⁶ *Les danses religieuses*, p. 110.

a festive appeal. Once he sets forth by water to the 'mistress of the sycamore', another time he goes from Edfu to Dendera. ¹

(6) No one who carefully scrutinises all this matter can fail to see that there are few purely Hathor festivals, that is festivals which might be said to be a ritual actualisation of the mythic ideas attached to the figure of Hathor. The majority of the festive days on which Hathor appears are of a complex ideological structure. Still, on these occasions too, Hathor is completely in her element. Consequently an inquiry into the meaning of such festivals can surely contribute to an increased knowledge of the nature of the goddess.

Having considered these points of principle, we shall now investigate the course and significance of those Hathor festivals about which so many details are known that they can help fill in the picture of Hathor gradually produced in this study.

(a) The aforementioned festival of the plucking of the papyrus for Hathor (*ssš wꜥd.w n Ht-Hr*) must have been celebrated since time immemorial, for it is even mentioned in the Pyramid Texts (Pyr. 388). Opinions differ as to the origins and purport of this festive ritual. In the first place the opinion may be mentioned that this ritual originated from the poetic custom of plucking flowers, especially the papyrus, for a lady-love. ² This papyrus-plucking is depicted in various graves. The plucking and offering of papyrus is not just an elegant gesture, it has also a symbolic meaning, for the papyrus is the token of renewing life and of the joy one wishes the person to whom the floral homage is paid. ³ According to a second explanation of the term *ssš wꜥd.w*, the purport is not the plucking, but the rustling of the papyrus. ⁴ This interpretation admits of a connection between the verb *ssš* = 'to rustle' and *ssš.t*, 'the sistrum', the well-known musical instrument of Hathor which is supposed to imitate the sound of rustling papyrus. ⁵ The meaning of this playful shaking of the papyrus is supposed to be the invocation and propitiation of Hathor who, as savage cow-goddess, lives in the marshy region of the Nile delta. The goddess was known to have an unpredictable temperament, and by performing this grace-

¹ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Plah*, p. 192.

² KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 90.

³ KEES, *op. cit.*; H. JUNKER, Giza IV. Die Mastaba des Kꜣjm'nh (Ak. der Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse. Denkschriften 7 Band, 1 Abh. 1940).

⁴ A. HERBMANN, *Altägyptische Liebesdichtung*, 1959, p. 14-28.

⁵ *Op. cit.*

ful ritual it was hoped that she would bless the labours of the fishers, the shepherds and farmers who worked in these areas. ¹

The *ssš wꜥd.w* was presumably a ritual of multiple purport. It was a festive custom with a religious undertone. The representations in the graves conjure up a pleasure trip through the papyrus groves. On such an occasion what could be more natural than to pluck the papyrus, symbol of life and joy, and to present it to one's lady-love. The rustling of the papyrus formed the harmonious accompaniment to the voyage. This immemorial custom developed into a solemn ritual. It became an act of homage to the lady of the papyrus groves, the goddess Hathor. It was a way of appealing to her, of paying her homage and of trying to gain her favour.

(b) Furthermore the great festival calendar of Dendera contains interesting details about certain typically Hathor festivals. Thus this calendar notes with respect to 1 Thoth: "Festival of Re on New Year's Day, festival of all the gods and goddesses". Thereafter follows the announcement that, after the celebration of the prescribed rituals, Hathor accompanied by her suite is borne in her ship *wꜥs nfrw.š* = '(the boat) which exalts or realises her beauty (her personality, her vitality)' ² to the roof of the temple on the eighth hour of the day. There a solemn ritual is performed: the goddess joins her father, the sun-god (*hnm it.š*), which means that the rays of the sun shine upon the effigy of Hathor. Apparently the goddess is imbued with new life through this ritual. The calendar confines itself to the factual statement of this pregnant event. Other texts are more poetic and so hint at the purport of this festival. We read: "When she (Hathor) raises herself like Horus at the head of her retinue and takes her place in her boat, she illuminates her temple on New Year's Day, and she unites (her) rays with (those) of her father in the horizon." ³ As so often in the Ptolemaic temples, Hathor appears here as a figure of light, as a sun-eye. According to the passage quoted, some sort of interchange of radiation takes place between Re and Hathor: the two divinities reinforce each others potential of light. Elsewhere we read what the outcome of this event is namely that all gods and goddesses are in a festive mood and the East and the West clasp hands, ⁴ in other words harmony reigns, because unity has been effectuated between two mighty gods.

¹ *Les Pèlerinages*, Sources orientales III, 1960, p. 27.

² W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, 1949, p. 134 sq.

³ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, I, 39d.

⁴ MARIETTE, *Description* p. 204/5; E. CHASSINAT, *Le temple de Dendérah*, 1934, VI, p. 158.

A good idea of the procession to the roof of the temple can be formed thanks to the graphic representations that ornament the two staircases leading upstairs. Led by their king, priests solemnly walk bearing their cultic objects. The priests probably congregated in what was called the New Year's chapel, ascended the one stairway and, on completion of the ceremony on the temple roof, descended the other one.

Although Hathor plays a leading role on this occasion, the festival as such is not held in her honour. The New Year's festival was a very old ceremony.¹ It was celebrated because then the Nile began to rise and the inundation of the river banks, which made the crops flourish once more, could be expected. The festival marked a new beginning, the ushering in of a period of resurrecting life, of joy and peace. Even though the New Year's festival was based on an idea that did not directly emanate from Hathor's being, it is nonetheless significant that she appears so forcibly in the foreground of this festival. Indeed she stimulates all power of growth to a high degree. In addition she was expected to promote the inundation. As stated in II B, one of her epithets was: 'the ruler over Sirius (the star whose rising heralded the beginning of the floods), the great one who makes *H'pj* (the Nile) come'.

The New Year's festival was not the only occasion on which the said ritual was enacted. The union of Hathor and Re is also recorded for 20 Thoth, 11 and 15 Pachon and on the new moon of Epiphi. Moreover Hathor was not the only divinity for whom this ritual was celebrated. Horus of Edfu also experienced this sacred act, which ALLIOT calls: "le rite de toucher le soleil". On the grounds of the texts present in Edfu, the said author describes the ritual in a way that is elucidating for the events in Dendera, thus: "Le prêtre du roi donnait le signal, en montant sur l'escalier devant l'image d'Horus. Il ouvrait la porte, il abaissait le voile (*wn hr*), et par ce geste plaçait la lumière divine sur la face du dieu; il voyait le dieu dans son tabernacle. Puis il prenait les grains de natron du nord et du sud, et les offrait; il saisissait les quatre vases *nmś.t* et *dśr.t* et aspergeait d'eau sainte le tabernacle, en tournant quatre fois autour de lui. Les autres images recevaient les mêmes soins. Le mystère s'accomplissait sur elles: la vertu du soleil s'unissait à leur personne divine."² This quotation is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the ceremony which was enacted on the temple roof at Dendera on 1 Thoth.

¹ H. FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods*, 1948, p. 433 sq.

² ALLIOT, *op. cit.* p. 353.

(c) The festival celebrated on 20 Thoth deserves particular attention. It is called 'the festival of inebriety for Hathor'. It was thus a wine festival at which this alcoholic beverage was plentifully imbibed in honour of the goddess. The resultant intoxication was not the same thing as ordinary befuddling of the senses, but within the framework of the Hathor worship it was equivalent to a state of ecstasy engendered in honour of the goddess, as explained in section II D f. This enthusiasm of Hathor's worshippers responds to the ecstatic trait in her being. Now sacral drunkenness is said to have a calming as well as an exciting effect. In this respect Hathor constituted the mythical archetype,¹ for when Hathor as sun-eye was sent by Re to chastise mankind, she forgot her orders and cooled her rage by becoming intoxicated on the beer poured on the spot where she was to commence her punitive expedition (II D f). The texts make no secret of the fact that, in spite of all her benevolence, Hathor often became wrathful and ever and again had to be pacified. The wine was a powerful means of allaying her wrath. Her adherents followed her example. At the festival of drunkenness for Hathor, they freed themselves of all unpleasant feelings, resentment and repressed, angry passions.

(d) Then we come to the ceremony performed on certain days of the month Tybi, known as the festive voyage of Hathor. This ritual is dated 19-21 Tybi and was repeated in the period from 28 Tybi to (4 ?) Mechir. The calendar mentions further "a voyage of Hathor to *Pꜣḥ.t*, to the temple of the seven Hathors" at Beni Hassan in the period between 21 and 30 Mechir. A ritual voyage is also said to have been celebrated on 1 Hathyr, though this renowned festival is not mentioned in the calendar. At Dendera, Edfu and Esna, the festivities began on 19 Tybi, and on the following days other festive voyages by water were organised.

The ritual which took place on 19-21 Tybi is accompanied by a motivation. We read: "the ceremonial was inaugurated(?) for the goddess by her father; it was celebrated for her when she returned from *Bwgm*." Elsewhere it is stated that Re appointed a day on which the return of his daughter was to be commemorated by festivity. The quotation in question is a clear reference to the myth of the savage goddess called Tefnet, who was lured to Egypt by Thoth and there changed into a lovable being.² As will be made manifest in the chapter

¹ H. BRUNNER, "Die theologische Bedeutung der Trunkenheit", *Z.Ä.S.* 70, 1954.

² H. JUNKER, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, Anhang zu den Abh. der kön. preuss. Ak. der Wiss. 1911; *Les danses sacrées*, p. 59/60.

on Thoth, this myth is inextricably interwoven with the myth of the sun-eye that left Re and had to be returned to the sun-god by Thoth. There is a Hathor temple on Philae that marks the spot where the goddess arrived. Little imagination is needed to appreciate that these festive days must have been rather tumultuous. The people had ample opportunity to enjoy the festivities to the full. Songs were sung to the accompaniment of sistra and other musical instruments. Some idea of the tone and poetic content of this poetry can be inferred from the texts found in the propylons of the Hathor temple on Philae. As testimonial a single quotation might be taken from the translation of FR. DAUMAS :

“Que ton visage est beau,
lorsque tu apparais en gloire,
lorsque tu es joyeuse,
Hathor vénérable, Dame de Senmout.
Ton père Re exulte, quand tu te lèves,
Ton frère Chou rend hommage à ta face.
Thoth, puissant en breuvage-enivrant, t'appelle, o Puissant,
Le grand Ennéade est dans le plaisir et l'allégresse.”¹

There is every reason to scrutinise the aforesaid mythic motivation of the ritual. It holds good insofar as this festival was a commemoration of the arrival in Egypt of the savage goddess from distant southern regions. But it in no way covers the ideological significance of the ritual of the passage by water. To comprehend the purport of this, one must first think back on what was said of Hathor's boat in II E. The sacred boat was a divine being and represented the godhead. Hathor's boat is mentioned already in the Coffin Texts. It is the vessel in which Hathor goes to the festivals at the beginning of the months (C.T. VI, 239, a, d). From this passage it appears that the voyage by boat was, in certain instances, a festive ritual with a practical purpose. This certainly applies to the above-mentioned voyage of Hathor to *Pꜣḥ.t* : she went to visit the temple of the seven Hathors. But there were other voyages without a special destination. The notion that this was a pleasure trip made by the goddess during which she appeared before the congregated people does not exhaust the full significance of the ritual of the voyage. In the final result it was a triumphal procession. The water sailed by Hathor had an ambivalent significance : it was the

¹ FR. DAUMAS, *Les propylées du temple d'Hathor à Philae et le culte de la déesse* (Z.Ä.S. 95).

life-giving element and also the symbol of chaos and death. Hathor's voyage expressed her victory over the last-mentioned forces.¹

(e) In turning our attention to the next festival, we depart from the chronological order of the calendar. This festival was held on the fourth intercalary day. In the calendar the festival is called 'the beautiful day of the night of the child in the cradle, the great festival of the entire world'. The child in the cradle is the goddess Isis who, according to the myth, was born on the fourth intercalary day. Elsewhere it is stated that "Dendera is exalted and perpetuated, since Isis was born there as a dark red woman."² In Section II F it was noted that at a very early period Hathor and Isis were continually being interchanged. This child in the cradle could, therefore, also refer to Hathor. There is some occasion for this supposition, for it was the birth of 'a dark red woman', and this must be a reference to Hathor. Like all colours, red has a symbolic meaning and here even a multiple one. In the first place one can think of the red colour which the Nile has when the floods commence. Mythologically these Nile waters were conceived of as the tears wept by Isis at the death of Osiris.³ The red water promoted the fertility of which Hathor was, par excellence, the patroness. Red is also the colour of grimness and rage.⁴ It is therefore not too presumptuous to think of Hathor as the "dark red woman", the goddess who promotes the flow of the red flood-waters, but who can also become red with anger.

(f) For only one festival with Hathor as leading figure is there a rather detailed description extant. This is the glorious journey to Edfu which the goddess makes to visit Horus and to participate in a series of festive rites lasting 14 days.⁵ Since the information given about this festival requires a more detailed treatment, it has been kept to the last.

Hathor's arrival at Edfu fell on the day of the new moon of Epiphi. For this journey Hathor used her ship called *nb mrw.t*, meaning mistress of love. Evidently some doubt about the date of departure exists in the tradition. H. JUNKER quotes a text which has Hathor depart from

¹ W.B. KRISTENSEN. *De symboliek van de boot in den egyptischen godsdienst*, 1919.

² MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, I 19e.

³ CHR. DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT, CH. KUENTZ, *Le petit temple d'Abou Simbel "Nofertari pour qui se lève le dieu-soleil", étude archéologique et épigraphique, essai d'interprétation*, 1968.

⁴ G. RUDMITZKY, *Die Aussagen über "das Auge des Horus"*. Eine altägyptische Art geistiger Äusserung nach dem Zeugnis des alten Reiches (*Analecta Aegyptica*, 1956), p. 55.

⁵ ALLIOT, *op. cit.*

Dendera on 18 Payni. ¹ M. ALLIOT, however, has convincingly demonstrated that the journey should not have taken more than four days. He has also reconstructed Hathor's journey as accurately as possible considering the lacunae in the text. On the first day Hathor visited the goddess Mut in her temple of *Išrw* at Thebes. On the second day she reached *Pr mr*, where a sanctuary of the goddess Anukis was located. On the third day she arrived at Hieraconpolis, the ancient *Nhn*, where she greeted the local Horus who honoured her by accompanying her on her voyage to Edfu. In the meantime Horus of Edfu, together with Khonsu, had set out to meet Hathor. The meeting took place at *Wts.t-Hr* to the north of Edfu. Together the divinities then proceeded to the temple of Horus at Edfu.

A minute description of the last part of Hathor's journey from her arrival at the sanctuary at Edfu and including the ceremonies that filled Hathor's fourteen-day visit would exceed the scope of this study. Moreover it is hardly necessary, for ALLIOT has dealt with this subject in a masterly fashion and has left us a fascinating account of these festivities. ² In keeping with the aim of this study to understand more fully the character of Hathor, partly via the festivals, there now follows an outline of the successive sacred acts.

Before the divine barques departed from *Wts.t-Hr*, an offer of first-born was made and certain rituals were performed in order to ascertain whether the time of departure was propitious. Once this was confirmed, the barques sailed on to *'I;t-Gb*, the hill of Geb, where a great offer was made. Towards the evening of the day of the new moon the flotilla landed at the temple of Horus, where its arrival was met with loud cheering by the keenly attentive masses. Thereafter the divine effigies were placed in the sanctuary of the temple. On the following day the so-called festival of *Bhd.t* (Edfu) commenced. The company repaired to a sanctuary higher up, where diverse rituals were celebrated, one being an offer to 'the godly souls'. On the second day the procession led to the *sm;t* of *Bhd.t*. Once again an offer was made to 'the godly souls'. It is recorded that the ceremonies of the third and fourth days were held within the holy places. Of the rituals that imbued the following ten days with a festive enchantment not a word is said in the texts. On the last day Horus took leave of his guest Hathor, who returned to Dendera.

¹ H. JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende*, p. 117.

² ALLIOT. *op. cit.* p. 443 sq.

More important than a minute analysis of the texts is the question of the significance of this festival. The answer given by H.W. FAIRMAN has become standard and has been adopted by other scholars. He believes that on the first day of the festival a *iepos gamos* was concluded between Hathor and Horus. The conclusion arrived at in his study is therefore: "The Sacred Marriage (i.e. of Horus and Hathor) is the perfect Egyptian example of the anthropologist's ideal pattern of sacred marriage, linked with harvest rites and the cult of the ancestors."¹ No doubt his thesis that harvest rites and the veneration of godly souls was bound up with this festival is right. But was the supreme act really a *iepos gamos*? It could be that FAIRMAN was led to adopt this view by the name of the festival, for it is called *hb n shn* (*nfr*), 'the festival of the (beautiful) embrace'. The verb *shn* means 'to embrace, to meet (someone)'. ALLIOT's translation of the name is "fête de la (bonne) réunion". The inevitable question is, what is implied by 'réunion'? Was it a platonic friendly encounter, or did a *iepos gamos* really take place? Before investigating whether any support for FAIRMAN's view can be found in the texts, I should like to consider what the structure of the *iepos gamos* is, and whether the idea of such a divine marriage, especially with reference to Hathor, is compatible with the religious climate of ancient Egypt.

The classic example of the *iepos gamos* is the alliance between the sky-god and the earth-goddess, in which cosmic life finds its origin. This conception is universal and is found among numerous peoples.² In this conjugal union, the goddess, the mother, is the principal person. For the pursuance of the argument it is also important to note that she is an earth-goddess.³ The fruit of this marriage is always new life. Not always is the new life personified as a godly child. A fine example of a godly child who issued from a godly marriage and who attracts more religious interest than his parents is contained in the mysteries of Eleusis.⁴ Now here, too, myth and ritual go hand in hand. Attached to the myth of the *iepos gamos* is a ritual in which the sacred idea is actualised: the clearest and finest examples of this are to be found in

¹ H.W. FAIRMAN, *Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple*, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Volume 37, 1954/5, p. 196 sq.

² M. ELIADE, *Traité d'Histoire des Religions*, 1949, p. 212.

³ G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, 1933, p. 163.

⁴ C.G. JUNG and C. KÉRENYI, *Introduction to a Science of Religion*, The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mystery of Eleusis, 1951.

the religion of Mesopotamia.¹ There a goddess, called Inanna by the Sumerians and Ishtar by the Babylonians, celebrated her holy marriage to her partner Tammuz. From time immemorial this mythical marriage was repeated in a temple ritual of great dramatic power. Diverse partners could be concerned in this union, namely the god and the goddess, or the goddess and the priest-king, or the god and the priestess. The main features of this happening are known, but need not be sketched here in greater detail. The actual deed seems to have been mainly of a symbolic nature. Especially in later times. Still the deed could also be carried out realistically. From certain sources it appears that the kings were held by duty to visit and espouse the priestess of Inanna once a year. Finally I believe it is clarifying to note that the *ἑπος γαμος* was not the only pattern in which a god and a goddess could be linked together. The ancient Romans placed gods and goddesses in pairs, like Janus and Vesta for example, without there being any question of a marriage or the birth of children.²

Now the interesting point at issue is to what degree the mythic-ritual pattern of the *ἑπος γαμος* existed in ancient Egypt and furthermore if the religious world of thought of that age could feasibly have envisaged Hathor celebrating this sacred marriage at Edfu. Since there is no concensus of opinion on this matter, it is preferable to develop the argument point by point.

(a) There are two famous examples of the mythic *ἑπος γαμος* namely of Geb and Nut and of Osiris and Isis. Strangely enough the gender of the gods in the first case is the opposite of that of the partners in the divine marriage in the other ancient religions: the god of the earth, Geb, is masculine, whilst that of the sky, Nut, is feminine. The god who separates these two divinities is not their son, but Shu, the god of air belonging to an older generation. The mythic significance of the marriage of Osiris and Isis, of which Horus was born, is so widely known that nothing further need be said of it. In the calendar of Hathor at Edfu it is commemorated on 4 Epiphi in the following words: "Conception of Horus, son of Isis and son of Osiris. He is brought into this world in the month Pharmuthi, the 28th."³ This annotation, inserted as it is in a calendar of Hathor, engenders the supposition that Hathor, who was repeatedly identified with Isis in

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *De moedergodin in de oudheid*, 1960, p. 42 sq.

² Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 1925, II, p. 44.

³ ALLIOT, *op. cit.* p. 234.

later times, is meant here and thereby is placed in the scheme of a divine marriage where she originally did not belong. Consequently the calendar mentions for 28 Pharmuthi: festival of the parturition of Hathor.¹ However, it is doubtful, as we will see, whether Hathor really celebrated her marriage with Horus, which in the case would have taken place on 1 Epiphi. That would at any rate mean that the conception took place on the latter date and not on 4 Epiphi. For that matter this calendar obtains another one of those contradictions which puzzle Egyptologists. Moreover on 4 Pharmuthi we read: "Horus, son of Isis and son of Osiris is brought into the world; 'the childhood of the goddess' is celebrated for Isis, the mother of the god."² This does not tally with the statements for 4 Epiphi and 28 Pharmuthi.

(b) The birth of the gods is repeatedly mentioned in the texts. Sometimes this occurs in the category of the human marriage and the parents are known, as in the case of Shu and Tefnet who procreated Geb and Nut, and in the case of Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys, the children of Geb and Nut. Even the place where Isis was born is known. It is Dendera, where, behind the temple of Hathor, a little sanctuary dedicated to Isis commemorates this event. Sometimes, however, the parents are not present at all, and the concept 'birth' expresses the idea that the divinity in question had the faculty of periodically renewing his life. Such a 'birth' is ascribed to Min, for example. The *prt* festival of the exodus, the appearance of Min, is the ritual actualisation of this idea.³

(c) There is no temple ritual in Egypt which actualises the *ἱερος γαμος* in as clear a manner as in Mesopotamia. What is found here in texts and representations is a royal ideology based on the idea that the pharaoh was born of the marriage between the queen and the sun-god. In paragraph II D g on Hathor as royal goddess the role played by the goddess in this deed has already been discussed. Further perusal of this theme sheds light on the problem in question. The well known studies on the ideology of the birth of the young pharaoh as offspring of the sun-god and the queen were based mainly on the famous texts and representations in the temples at Deir el-Bahari and Luxor. Recent studies on the *mammisis* or birth-houses,⁴ however, have revealed

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 231.

² *Op. cit.* p. 230.

³ C.J. BLEEKER, *Min*. p. 69 sq.

⁴ E. CHASSINAT, *Le Mammisis d'Edfou*, I, 1910, II, 1939; FR. DAUMAS, *Les mammisis*

that these data can and must be placed within a broader framework. Specifically, there exist six versions of the text of the divine birth, namely in the temples at Deir el-Bahari, in the birth-house of Nectanebo at Dendera, in the mammisis at Philae and at Edfu and in the texts in Dendera pertaining to Trajan.¹ A comparison of these texts and representations results in the following interesting details: (a) in the older versions the female partner is the queen; in the Ptolemaic age, when national kingship had disappeared, her place is taken over by a goddess, in casu Hathor; (b) the offspring of this marriage can be held to be either the young pharaoh or the young god; (c) despite the switching of actors in this drama, human or divine, the fundamental thought remains the same and "le mystère de la naissance divine", as S. SAUNERON has it,² is, despite slight alterations, expressed in a consistent terminology and in traditional scenes. (d) Amon, who acts as father of the divine child at Deir el-Bahari and at Luxor, continues to play this role later, though is at times replaced by such gods as Horus of Edfu or Khnum of Esna.³ In conclusion it can be stated definitely that, in keeping with the all-powerful position of kingship in Egypt, the idea of a divine marriage is entirely absorbed in the royal ideology. The *lepos gamos*, in which one partner can be either human or divine in turn, is not the source of cosmic life, but must serve as ideological fundament of kingship.

After this elaboration, we return to the question posed: what is the significance of the *hb shn (nfr)*? Is it the *lepos gamos* between Hathor and Horus? Did a divine marriage really take place? To find a good answer to these questions it must be appreciated clearly that the festivities celebrated between 1 and 14 Epiphi at Edfu have a complex structure. Clarity of insight can therefore only be achieved by making certain coherent observations. As pointed out above, what first strikes the mind is that in the intricate ritual of these festivals various mythic motifs are interwoven. Thus, secondly, it appears from certain texts that Hathor came to Edfu as the sun-eye that returns to her father. She is literally called the eye of Re that has come to Edfu to see her father. Re-Horus cries out for joy, when he sees and takes hold of

des temples égyptiens, 1958; FR. DAUMAS, *Les mammisis de Dendera*, 1959; H. JUNKER und E. WINTER, *Das Geburtshaus des Tempels der Isis in Philä*, 1965.

¹ DAUMAS, *Les Mammisis des temples égyptiens*, p. 382.

² S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, p. 185 sq.

³ DAUMAS, *op. cit.* p. 503.

her. ALLIOT, who nowhere in his studies alludes to a possible *lepos gamos*, seeks in this last-mentioned gesture of Re the explanation for the name of the *hb n shn (nfr)*. The gesture of *shn* is interpreted as Re placing his daughter Hathor on his forehead in the form of the uraeus, in keeping with the well-known mythic representation discussed in II D f. ¹ Thirdly allusions are found in the festival texts to the victory gained by Horus over his foes. ² Fourthly the festival consequently assumes the nature of a *sd*-festival. In later times the gods also celebrated their *sd*-festivals in emulation of kings. Regardless of the significance one wishes to ascribe to the *sd*-festival, it is in any case a festival that renews the life of the celebrant. ³ Here again we see to what great degree the symbolism of kingship determined the mythic apperception of the life of the gods. Fifthly the motif of the promotion of fertility is very obvious. Indeed an offer is made of first-born. L. CHRISTOPHE even ascribes an agrarian explanation to this entire festival and believes that it was celebrated on the inception of the Nile flood. ⁴ CHR. DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT and CH. KUENTZ share this opinion. ⁵ Hathor fits perfectly into this line of thought, for she was pre-eminently the patroness of fertility. Hence it is not mere coincidence that a procession is ordained for Hathor on 5 Paophi during which an offer is made to her that is characterized as "the phallus, which makes all that exists fertile," ⁶ and that on 30 Hathyr during a procession of Hathor a ritual is celebrated that is called 'opening of the bosom of the women', ⁷ a ritual evidently intended to ensure women the blessing of children. Finally it must not be forgotten that the cult of the dead also occupied an important place in the framework of this festival, albeit that it was not concerned with human dead, but with divine souls of whom the text says, in the translation of ALLIOT, that they are "les dieux-vivants qui sortent de Ra, l'ennéade des fils d'Atoum, (ils) sont cachés dans leur (tertre) *i3.t.*.. mais leur descendance sur terre n'est pas terminée (?) et leurs âmes se sont envolées vers le ciel, (où) elles vivent (éternellement) parmi les étoiles." ⁸

¹ ALLIOT, *op. cit.* p. 499, 501.

² *Op. cit.* 542.

³ BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 91 sq.

⁴ L. CHRISTOPHE, *Les fêtes agraires du calendrier d'Hathor à Edfou* (Cahiers d'histoire égyptienne, série VII, Fasc. 1, février, 1955).

⁵ DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT-KUENTZ, *op. cit.*

⁶ ALLIOT, *op. cit.* p. 224.

⁷ ALLIOT, *op. cit.* p. 226.

⁸ *Op. cit.* p. 515.

The analysis of the mythic conceptions underlying this festival demonstrates clearly that Hathor had every reason to participate in the festivals of Edfu in the first half of Epiphi. She appeared there as sun-eye, as goddess of fertility, as goddess of the dead and in these qualities was not only an honoured guest, but above all a godly figure whose presence must be considered indispensable. By virtue of her personality and dynamic power she helped to a large degree to actualise magnificently in ritual the mythic concept on which the festival was based. It is, however, highly doubtful whether a *ἱερός γάμος* took place during the meeting between Hathor and Horus. The reasons for this doubt are set forth in the above observations. More precisely they can be formulated as follows. Apart from in the two cases Geb-Nut and Osiris-Isis the figure of the *ἱερός γάμος* does not occur in Egypt. Mention is made of the birth of gods, but with the exception of the birth of certain members of the enneads of Heliopolis, no parents are present at this 'birth'. The term is a symbolic interpretation of the power of the deity in question to renew his life. The divine marriage seen as the alliance between the queen and the sun-god which provides the foundation of kingship is typically Egyptian. It was to this concept that the later *mammisis* were dedicated, although national kingship had disappeared from view and the human, female partner had ceded her place to a divine one, who could have been Hathor. Still, the ideology of the *mammisis* is of a different plane than the pattern of thought underlying the festivals in Epiphi. In the chapter on Hathor it was clearly demonstrated that Hathor originally did not have a partner. It would therefore be quite incorrect to consider Horus of Edfu as her marriage partner par excellence, for, apart from the fact that Re-Horus is also called her father in the festival calendar, Hathor is accompanied by other partners on occasion, such as Shu,¹ Harakhte,² and Amon.³ During the course of the investigation it was noted more than once that the family relationship between gods — the relationship between man and wife and between parents and children — had a symbolic purport and no erotic strain. Like the Romans, the Egyptians also grouped their gods in pairs or triads (triplets). Hence there is no reason why Hathor's trip to Horus of Edfu could not have been an ordinary platonic friendly visit. It is comparable to the visits paid by Ptah to

¹ H. JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende*, p. 7, 31.

² ALLIOT, *op. cit.* p. 508.

³ FR. DAUMAS, *Les mammisis de Dendera*, 1959, Pl. IV G.

his daughter Hathor.¹ During one of them, the text states, he embraced her. The term used here : “*rdj wj h*”, ‘to place the arms about (someone)’, is reminiscent of the term *shn*, ‘to embrace, to meet’ in the title of the ‘festival of the beautiful meeting’. The weightiest argument for a negative conclusion about the possibility of a *ἑπος γαμος* having taken place at Edfu on 1 Epiphi is the silence of the texts. Nowhere do we find even an allusion to such a happening. The simultaneous erection in the temple of the effigies of Hathor and Horus on the evening of 1 Epiphi is not sufficient proof that a divine marriage was thought of. A comparison with the conclusion of the divine marriage in Mesopotamia makes it glaringly obvious that in Egypt a different world of thought prevailed. In Mesopotamia the bridal couple go to the room called the bridal chamber, where the *ἑπος γαμος* takes place. As soon as the completion of the sacred ritual is announced, there is great rejoicing and exuberant celebration. This ritual framework, which is the logical setting of a *ἑπος γαμος*, is lacking in Egypt.

This negative conclusion in no way detracts from the significance of the festival in Epiphi or from the import of Hathor’s presence on that occasion. It was a great feast at which Hathor’s presence was indispensable. With her personality she imbued the festive rites with radiance and content.

Reflecting on the discussion of the festivals in which Hathor was concerned, one must again conclude that only four of them sprang forth from her being and were therefore ritual actualisations of one of her characteristics. These are the festival of the plucking and the rustling of the papyrus, the festival of inebriety, the festival of the voyage and the visit to Edfu. No further argumentation is needed to demonstrate that the first two festivals owe their origin to qualities of character possessed by Hathor. The third festival expresses her unconquerable vitality. At the fourth festival her role is that of sun-eye, patroness of fertility and goddess of the dead.

¹ SANDMAN HOLMBERG. *Ptah*. p. 192.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HATHOR

Hathor was a goddess who fired the religious imagination of the Egyptians from the very earliest times. She was a mighty goddess, a versatile personality. Hathor appears in so many guises that she leaves an almost chameleon-like impression. On the one hand she was a fetishistic, local goddess, on the other a cosmic power. Alternately she is a cow-goddess, a tree-goddess, a patroness of love, of song and dance and a bestower of all abundance, a protectress of the dead, a sky-goddess, a sun-eye, a royal goddess and, moreover, she is concerned with foreign lands.

She is truly an imposing figure. No one could wonder at her being the subject of an impressive cult, at glorious festivals being held in her honour, as is witnessed by the texts and representations in the temples of Dendera, Edfu, Esna and Philae. She could pride herself on her great popularity and her ability to win the love of her adherents, especially the women. The beautiful hymns dedicated to her are convincing proof of this. These songs also reveal that Hathor could evoke sincere piety.

There can be no doubt that such a mighty goddess had a homogeneously composed character, even though, at first sight, this seems to be a paradoxical idea. How, then, can an explanation be found for her seemingly disparate guises and for the very essence of her being.

When seeking to find the answer to the former, H. FRANKFORT¹ pointed the way with his thesis that the Egyptians followed the principle of 'the multiplicity of approaches' to assess, describe and comprehend the essence of their gods. This principle implies that, in ancient Egypt, pronouncements could be made about a god which outwardly are contradictory and incompatible. In reality they are various approaches to the mysterious being of the divinity. Each of such figurations contains a part of the truth, and together they convey the many-sided character of the god in question.

Hathor's nature was so complex that the Egyptians were able to discover different facets in it. In her being there are inner contra-

¹ H. FRANKFORT, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 1948 p. 4, 18, 19, 91, 121.

dictions, antithetic tendencies which nevertheless preserve a mutual equilibrium. It is precisely these polar tensions that made Hathor such a warm-blooded divine personality.

As cow-goddess she is the personification of the primeval, creative and divine power. She is the motherly being who promotes fertility, the goddess of abundance who brings about all good things, ¹ the mistress of the viands and of food ² who creates the bread and the beer, ³ the bestower of the blessing of children, the donor of health, ⁴ the mistress of longevity. As tree-goddess she has the same function, for the tree is the manifestation of self-renewing life. Little wonder that she was loved by both the living and the dead. The deceased hoped to be of service to her so that they might attain to a blessed destiny in the life hereafter. The living allowed themselves be swept along in her whirlwind traces, for Hathor is the goddess of enthusiasm. She loves music, song and dance and revels in happy feasts. At times her cult assumed an ecstatic character. The festival of inebriety is a testimonial of this: the wine both entranced and soothed the goddess — her adherents sought inner liberation in exuberant and enthusiastic merry-making.

In addition to the élan so characteristic of her, Hathor remains faithful to the cosmic order. This is not a flagrant contradiction, for to the Egyptian mind the cosmic order is not a causality ordained by nature, but is propelled by the wisdom and the dispositions of creative divine life. It is in this light that Hathor should be seen as sky-goddess, sun-eye and royal goddess. The sky, across which the sun-god follows his regular course, represents an unshakable order. In its majesty the nocturnal sky with which Hathor is allied bespeaks profound wisdom. As sun-eye she chastises the evil-doers and the rebellious. As royal goddess she protects the king, whose duty it is to maintain order in society. In these qualities Hathor is closely akin to Ma-a-t, indeed to such a degree that the two goddesses often accompany, or are identified with each other in the temple of Dendera. ⁵ The seven Hathors also fit into this context. Together they represent destiny, which according to the Egyptian conception was the consequence of world order.

Hathor's attributes tell us of her in a special way, her headdress and

¹ *A.N.E.T.* p. 970.

² *MARIETTE, Dendérah*, I 60a.

³ *Op. cit.* 55a.

⁴ *Les pèlerinages*, p. 56.

⁵ *MARIETTE, Dendérah* II, 41a, 46b, 52b.

other articles of her toilet, her *mnj.t*, her sistrum, her sacred boat and the mysterious fetish called *bꜣt*. As postulated in II E, these emblems are revealing manifestations of the essence of the goddess for lack of myths.

In a polytheistic religion like that of ancient Egypt it is inevitable that Hathor should come into contact with many gods and goddesses. She is called the mother and the partner of Horus and also the mother of Ihy and Harsomtus; she is the mother and the daughter of Re, the daughter of Ptah, the consort of Min and of Osiris; she is associated with Thoth and with Hapi. As for the goddesses, she has close relationships with Nut and with *Mḥt wr.t*. As sun-eye she is akin to Tefnet, whose figure in turn is interwoven with the savage goddess who was enticed to Egypt from distant lands. Her relationship with Jusas and Nebet-Hetepet is complicated. Her connection with Ma-a-t has already been discussed. She is identified with Sothis, because this star proclaims the inundation and hence the resurrection of vegetation, two processes in which Hathor is thought to have a hand. That the two great goddesses Isis and Hathor approximated to each other is not surprising. With Nephthys she shares the funerary role.

In later times Hathor was placed in diverse mythological schemes. This she suffered unwillingly, for she is of such an independent nature that it is difficult to force her into any mythic context. Her above-mentioned relationships with certain gods and goddesses are thus more of a symbolic than factual nature. Her affinity with certain gods and goddesses revealed in these relationships signifies that in many ways she can be compared with these deities. It does not imply that she is identical to them. Because of certain facets of her being she is cotangential with certain gods, but the true structure of her being differs in principle from that of the gods close to her.

While on this subject, it should once more be stated quite clearly that, originally, Hathor did not have a partner. Later various husbands were ascribed to her: Shu, Harakhte, Amon and especially Horus of Edfu, who is incorrectly said to be her typical companion. The analysis of 'the festival of the (beautiful) embrace or meeting' has shown that it is extremely doubtful whether a *ἔπος γάμος* took place on that occasion. A more feasible explanation is that it was a friendly visit paid during a festival of a mythic-ritual structure in which Hathor fitted in perfectly.

The polarity in her being already referred to is aptly formulated in the already quoted expression that Hathor can be as wrathful as

Sechmet and as gay as Bast.¹ On the one hand she is a martial and grim goddess as witnessed by her behaviour as sun-eye. This tumultuousness is also revealed by her as mistress of drunkenness. That trait is reflected in her cult, which is often of an ecstatic strain. On the other hand her favour and benevolence are highly commended. She is exuberant, generous and solicitous for those who need her help, whether living or dead. In her own way she contributes to the maintenance of the world order.

She has rightly been praised as "mistress of the goddesses, the venerable, beautiful woman; one beholds her light in the sky, in the twilight, since she was born in the city."² In short she is a majestic personage. The dynamism of her divine vitality commands respect. She has an inflammable temperament. Her wrath is much to be feared, but can be allayed. Then she reveals herself as a lovable being, as the giver of the good things in life. She loves joy and is loved for her goodness.

¹ C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne*, 1951, p. 309.

² MARIETTE, *op. cit.* I, 19e.

CHAPTER FIVE

THOTH

A) THOTH'S NAME

As a rule Thoth's name is written in hieroglyphics with the figure of the ibis. R. LEPSIUS was the first to discover that the name must be read as *Dḥwtj*.¹ This reading corresponds with the Coptic translation of the ancient Egyptian name, *Θωθ*, *Θωυθ*, with the neo-Babylonian transcript Tichut and with the appellation Tautos which Philo gives to the deity.² As yet no completely satisfactory explanation has been found for the significance of the name *Dḥwtj*. H. KEES believes no explanation can be found.³ Other Egyptologists point out that the name could be a so-called *nisbe* form meaning 'the one of *Dḥwt*'.⁴ Since no known city or region is called *Dḥwt*, this interpretation does not provide any insight into the meaning of the name. TH. HOPFNER also holds the name to be a *nisbe* form, but pursues a different line in his endeavour to decipher *Dḥwtj*.⁵ He believes that *dḥw* could have been the oldest name of the ibis, which is called *hbj* in Egyptian. *Dḥwtj* would then mean 'he who has the nature of the ibis'. As an argument for his postulation he cites a passage from the renowned myth of the destruction or salvation of mankind. In it an allusion is made to the name of Thoth. This is one of those figures of speech which appear to have been popular in ancient Egypt, because they were believed to make all sorts of religious quantities more comprehensible. Philologically such allusions are worthless, but for the history of religions they are not without meaning. In the aforesaid myth Re commands Thoth to send out his messengers (*hꜥb*). Thus, the text says, there came into being the ibis of Thoth.⁶ This quotation could more aptly be used to support the explanation that the term *dḥwtj* is conceived of as messen-

¹ R. PIETZSCHMANN, *Hermes Trismegistos*, 1875, p. 1.

² BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 805.

³ H. KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 306.

⁴ P. BOYLAN, *Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt*, 1922, p. 10; K. SETHE, *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis*, 1929, p. 38.

⁵ TH. HOPFNER, *Der Tierkult der alten Ägypter*, 1914, p. 117/8.

⁶ G. ROEDER, *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Ägypten*, 1923, p. 147/8.

ger. In his commentary on the name of Thoth, W. WESSETZKY proceeds from the substantive *hwwtj*, meaning 'messenger'.¹ By adding the prefix *d*, the name *Dhwwtj* is supposed to have been created.² Apart from the question whether this conjecture is valid philologically, it can find an ideological basis in the function which Thoth fulfilled in the world of the gods. He is the secretary of Re and also, as has already appeared, his messenger who promulgates the laws of 'the Lord of the All'.³ This interpretation also agrees with the Greek identification of Thoth with Hermes, who held the same office.

Interesting is the cryptic reproduction of the name of Thoth with the hieroglyphic sign for bread, to be read *tj* or *t*. The same sign can be found in the old style of writing *thn*, meaning 'ibis'.⁴ If this sign is not an ordinary abbreviation, it could be the indication of the participium activum of the verb *tj*, meaning 'to crush'.⁵ Thoth would thus be characterised as 'the crusher', the crusher of Seth and other foes. Thoth is, indeed, the great combatant and destroyer of his opponents. On this point K. SETHE remarks that this cryptic style of writing is not unique. Parallels are *Hr*, meaning 'the far one' for Horus and *Wd* meaning 'the condemned' for Seth.⁶

Since the end of the New Kingdom Thoth is often called Isdes. Isdes was a god who was held to be 'the Lord of the West' and who filled the office of the judge of the dead.⁷ Understandably Isdes was associated with Thoth, the famous advocate for the departed in the judgment of the dead. A later spelling is perhaps the name Isden or Isten, which was also used for Thoth.⁸

There would be little point in devoting so much attention to the name of Thoth if it were merely a question of an arbitrary appellation. But to the ancient mind a name expresses the being of its bearer.⁹

¹ W.B. 3, 44.

² W. WESSETZKY, "Zur Problematik des d-Präfixe und der Name des Thot", *Z.A.S.* 82, p. 152 sq.

³ K. SETHE, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen*, 1928, p. 104; W.B. 5, 211.

⁴ W.B. 5, 326.

⁵ W.B. 5, 237.

⁶ SETHE, *op. cit.* p. 104.

⁷ W.B. 1, 134.

⁸ BONNET, *op.cit.* p. 325/6.

⁹ H.W. OBBINK, *De magische beteekenis van de naam, in zonderheid in het oude Egypte*, 1925.

That applies to both men and gods. Whosoever knows the name, especially the true name, of a deity can exercise a certain power over him. This is illustrated in the well-known story about Re, who was bitten by a snake. The sun-god, who suffered unbearable pain, could only be healed by Isis with her magic power after he had whispered to her his real name, in other words had revealed his true being to her.¹ In this instance the name was a secret one that neither god nor man may know, and so Re whispered it in Isis' ear. But the known name of the deity is also significant. Thoth was given a name which, we may assume, was chosen by the Egyptians to express their conception of the nature of this god or which had a special meaning for them, as we have already seen. For this reason the above observations are well-suited for a first acquaintance with Thoth.

The epithets of Thoth could also be discussed under the same heading, because they are like surnames and as such illuminate in a pregnant manner certain aspects of his being. It is preferable, however, to deal with these epithets in a later context, when other data can lend them greater relief.

B) MANIFESTATIONS

The various ways in which Thoth is portrayed provide yet another interesting example of the relationship between certain gods and their sacred animals. Whenever Thoth takes action and makes pronouncements, he appears in human form with the head of an ibis. In the hieroglyphic script and among the emblems carried in temple processions he is at once distinguishable whenever the ibis occurs. In addition Thoth assumes at times the shape of a baboon. This animal belongs to the species called *κυνοκέφαλος* by the Greeks. For domestic use effigies of Thoth as baboon were made. There is an ode to Thoth which the author, who considered Thoth his divine patron, addresses to a statuette studded with precious stones representing the god as a baboon. This statuette brought good fortune and happiness to his home. The poet therefore exclaim :

“Praised be Thee, Lord of this house,
Thou, ape with white hair and beautiful figure...
He is of secret stone....

¹ J.B. PRITCHARD, *A.N.E.T.* p. 12 sq.

That which is on his head
is of red jasper
and his phallus is of quartz." ¹

This song is an interesting testimonial both of the affection Thoth could inspire in his worshippers and of this author's ability to recognise the god in the effigy of the baboon. To our minds this animal is anything but elegant, but the author-poet praises its beautiful figure. A remarkable thing is that Thoth seldom appears as a human with the head of a baboon. ² Still the sign of the ape in hieroglyphic script sometimes does stand for the name of Thoth. ³ Evidently the ibis expresses the essence of Thoth more adequately than the baboon. Obviously Thoth is portrayed alternately in his guises of ibis and of baboon. There are, however, certain instances of the god portrayed and worshipped simultaneously in both shapes. ⁴

What was the intention of the Egyptians when they portrayed Thoth with an ibis-head, or depicted him either as ibis or baboon?

As for the significance of the ibis, the Egyptians themselves gave an explanation mentioned in V A : Re tells Thoth to despatch his messengers (*h3b*) and so the ibis (*hbj*) of Thoth came into being. ⁵ Obviously this interpretation is worthless as the explanation of the ibis-shape of Thoth. Another approach must be taken.

To begin with it can be noted that the ibis occurs in the coat of arms of the 15th nome of Northern Egypt, of which the capital was called Hermopolis parva in later days. This name indicates the veneration of Thoth in this nome. Thoth was also worshipped in other delta towns, but the above-mentioned one seems to have been a centre of his cult and perhaps must be accounted the place where his worship originated. ⁶ Thoth is said to have been identified with an ibis-god in Hermopolis parva. ⁷

¹ Anast. III 4, 12 sq.; A. ERMAN, *Die Literatur der Aegypter*, 1923, p. 378.

² M.E. LEFÉBURE, *Le tombeau de Séti I*, 1886, IV, 39 : a god with the head of a monkey who keeps an ibis on his hand which he stretches forward, and who is called *Dhutj*.

³ S. SAUNERON, J. YOYOTTE, *Le cynocéphale comme graphie du nom de Thot*, *Revue d'Égyptologie*, 7, 1950, p. 9.

⁴ B. PORTER and R.L.B. MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Painting*, IV, p. 169.

⁵ ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 147/8.

⁶ BONNET, *Reallexikon*, p. 805; KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 48; SETHE, *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis*, p. 38.

⁷ BOYLAN, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

The last-mentioned supposition seems ill-founded and merely transfers the problem elsewhere, for now the following questions arise. What was the nature of the hypothetical ibis-god who preceded Thoth? Is it feasible that Thoth, who surely must have had a human shape in the beginning, later was changed into an ibis? Is it not possible that Thoth could have assumed the ibis-guise right from the beginning? And so we are back again to the principal question: why was Thoth conceived of as an ibis?

One explanation worth consideration is that the ibis is a lunar symbol. The beak of the ibis resembles the crescent moon, the gait of the ibis suggests that of the moon.¹ After all Thoth was a moon-god. Even PLUTARCH associates the ibis with the moon, for the alternating black and white feathers of this bird are reminiscent of the light and dark phases of the moon.² Similarly other classic authors draw a comparison between the ibis and the moon.³ These conceptions are interesting insofar as the outward appearance and the habits of the ibis are associated with the moon. Nevertheless these interpretations lack conviction. The similarity between the ibis and the moon is rather vague. Since the Egyptians left us no clear explanation themselves, one must simply guess. The answer can be sought in two different directions. The first starting point could be PLUTARCH's statement that the ibis attracted attention and was held in respect, because it destroyed poisonous reptiles and set mankind an example of cleanliness. The ibis taught him the art of purgation; it never drinks unhealthy and poisoned water and so the priests always drew water from places where the ibis had drunk.⁴ This means that, like Thoth, the ibis is the typical combatant of hostile beings. Furthermore the ibis was the example of cleanliness which, as is universally known, was one of the basic rules of the Egyptian cult, of which the principles were laid down by Thoth. The second starting point could be the supposition that the ibis gave the impression of being particularly sensible and so could be associated with Thoth. Indeed not only in Egypt, but in the entire ancient world, exceptional wisdom was ascribed to the moon-god. Perhaps it was a combination of these motives that led to the recognition of Thoth in the ibis. No

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 78.

² PLUTARCHUS, *op. cit.* caput 75.

³ HOFFNER, *Tierkult.* p. 119.

⁴ PLUTARCHUS, *op. cit.* caput 75.

stringent evidence can be produced to support this supposition. One must make do with a rather plausible explanation.

The Egyptians have also provided their own explanation of Thoth's second guises, that of the baboon. They relate that Re sent Thoth around the so-called *ḥꜣw-nbw*, i.e. the inhabitants of the Greek islands.¹ Thus, they say, there came into being the baboon (*i'nj*, 'n') of Thoth.² This, too, is a rather good play of words but it does not further this investigation. Now there are reliable indications that already in primeval days the ape was considered a sacred animal.³ Proof of this is to be found in archaic representations of this animal.⁴ It is said that originally a baboon-god called *ḥd wr* 'the great white one' was worshipped in Hermopolis magna, later the town of Thoth.⁵ Why was Thoth identified with this god? Ancient writers believed they could observe how the behaviour of the ape was influenced by the various phases of the moon.⁶ For them this was proof positive of the relationship between the baboon and the moon-god Thoth. Thus also the identification of Thoth with *ḥd wr* should be explained. To my mind this explanation lacks conviction. P. BOYLAN sees in the ape a symbol of the mysterious knowledge ascribed to Thoth.⁷ It is doubtful whether the ape shows any evidence of exceptional wisdom. It is possible, however, that already the Egyptians had observed that, of all animals, the ape most resembled man as *homo sapiens*, and so they associated it with Thoth, the *deus sapientissimus*. Along this line of reasoning, however, only an *explicatio verisimilis* is reached.

C) THOTH'S ORIGINS

Very diverse information is provided by the texts about Thoth's origins. Certain statements about the way he was brought into the world sound downright peculiar.

A natural descent is assumed when he is called the son of Re. Sometimes Thoth declares expressly: "I am the son of Re, the lord of the

¹ W.B. 3, 11.

² ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 147/8.

³ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 7.

⁴ J. CAPART, *Débuts de l'art égyptien*, 1904, p. 180.

⁵ KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 20.

⁶ HOPFNER, *Tierkult*, p. 26.

⁷ BOYLAN, *Thot*, p. 97.

eight gods (of Hermopolis).”¹ Or he says with a certain pride: “I am Thoth, the eldest son of Re.”² Sometimes amidst the other gods and goddesses he is pointed out emphatically as “the son of Re.”³ A remarkable pronouncement is that in Pyramid Text 1271, in which his name is said to be ‘thou hast no mother’. This statement occurs in a passage about a hostile attitude towards Thoth. Evidently what was said was intended to cast obloquy on Thoth.⁴ Mysterious is the appellation of Thoth as ‘(son of) the stone (who came forth) from (the two eggshells)’.⁵ This stone is the eggshell he split in two on his birth.⁶ According to this version Thoth was born as an bird, that is as an ibis. A very strange pronouncement is that Thoth emerged from the skull of Seth, who had been made pregnant by Horus. This conception is contained in the text on “The Contendings of Horus and Seth”, which presents a circumstantial account of the long-drawn-out suit between these two gods.⁷ Actually the aforesaid statement should be phrased more specifically, in the sense that it was at Thoth’s command that the lunar disc emerged from the head of Seth. Elsewhere, too, Thoth is called “the one who emerged from the skull”. This story of paederasty is intended to humiliate Seth, the arch-enemy. Furthermore in this strange story of birth account must be taken of a play of words: *wp.t* meaning ‘skull’ is reminiscent of *wp,wpw* meaning ‘judge’. Thoth often acts as judge. It reminds also of *wpw.tj* = messenger: Thoth is the messenger of Re.⁸ A strange statement about the birth of Thoth is contained in a late text from the temple of Esna. In the translation of S. SAUNERON the passage runs: “Thoth sortit de son cœur (Re) en un moment d’amertume (*dhr*), ce qui lui valut son nom de Thoth (*Dhwtj*). Il parla avec son père, qui l’envoya contre la révolte, en son nom de seigneur de la parole du dieu (*mdw ntr*). Et ce fut l’origine de

¹ KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 311.

² A. KLASSENS, *A Magical Statue Base (Socle Behague) in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden*, 1952, p. 57.

³ C.E. SANDER-HANSEN, *Die religiösen Texte auf dem Sarge der Anchesneferibre*, 1937, p. 67.

⁴ See also: K. SETHE, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, V p. 166, 183 sq.

⁵ *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, edited by TH.G. ALLEN, 1960, Spell 134, p. 219.

⁶ S. MORENZ, *Ägyptische Religion*, 1960, p. 187.

⁷ The Contendings of Horus and Seth, 12, 8 sq. (A.H. GARDINER, *Late-Egyptian Stories, Bibliotheca aegyptica I*, p. 37 sq.; G. ROEDER, *Mythen und Legenden um ägyptischen Gottheiten und Pharaonen*, 1960, p. 35 sq.)

⁸ H. KEES, “Zu den ägyptischen Mondsagen,” *Z.Ä.S.* 60, p. 1 sq.

Thoth, seigneur d'Hermopolis." ¹ This pun could be meaningful and hence could signify more than a play on similar words. The passage quoted could be interpreted as follows. Re, who was embittered about the rebellion of the people against his rule (also mentioned elsewhere), procreated Thoth so that he could send him out to crush the rebellion. As will appear, it was Thoth's task to chastise evildoers.

KEES has rightly pointed out that strange traits appear in the mythical conceptions of Thoth as moon-god. ² This is not surprising. The moon, which changes in shape regularly and radiates a mysterious silver light, has always stirred religious fantasy. ³ The moon is a mysterious and exceptional heavenly body. Apparently the Egyptians could not conceive of the moon-god being born in the normal way, so there came into being the above-mentioned mythical speculations about his birth.

In a quotation given above Thoth prides himself on being one of the oldest gods. True, he is not one of the famous ennead of Heliopolis, but he was accounted one of the ten members of the dynasty of gods who were believed to have reigned on earth before the appearance of earthly kings. ⁴

The concept 'origins' can have a local as well as theogonic meaning. With respect to the former, there arises the question whether any particular town can be designated the original home of Thoth. K. SETHE is of the opinion that originally at Hermopolis magna, the town which later became the centre of the veneration of Thoth, a goddess was worshipped who revealed herself in the guise of a hare. This deity was ousted by the ogdoad of Nun and Naunet, Huh and Hauhet, Kuk and Kauket, Amun and Amaunet. From this ogdoad (*hmnw*) Hermopolis derived its old name of *Hmnw*, '(town of) the eight'. The ogdoad created light, the sun-god. The members of this ogdoad were great, rather indistinct cosmic powers of the type that dropped into the background after some time and were no longer worshipped. This is a well-known occurrence in the history of religions. The same fate befell this ogdoad with the exception of Amon, who in Thebes assumed the distinct character of a sun-god and in this quality acquired great power and

¹ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna aux derniers siècles du paganisme*, 1902, § 15.

² KEES, *op. cit.*

³ *La lune, mythes et rites, sources orientales V.*

⁴ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 84.

respect.¹ At Hermopolis magna Thoth eclipsed the ogdoad. Where did he come from? In V B it has already been pointed out that the 15th nome of the Delta, of which the capital was later called Hermopolis parva, had an ibis in its coat of arms. This fact and the later name of the town could indicate that here Thoth was originally indigenous.

Whoever critically analyses the meagre data on which these suppositions are based cannot escape the feeling that the question about the original place of the Thoth worship has definitely not been answered satisfactorily and that very essential questions remain unresolved. For example, supposing Hermopolis parva may rightly claim to be the oldest town that paid homage to Thoth as patron, how can his removal to Hermopolis magna be explained? Here we are completely in the dark. And is a reversed order of events not feasible, from Hermopolis magna to Hermopolis parva? Besides, the gain to the study of history of religions made by such hypotheses is exceptionally slight. In this respect there is one consideration of greater weight: that is the practically certain supposition that the moon-god Thoth, i.e. a god of cosmic format, must have been worshipped almost universally right from the beginning. Naturally there were a number of minor gods in ancient Egypt whose importance did not rise beyond their local horizons, but it is evident that the moon-god Thoth was universally known and worshipped. The search for a place of 'origin' would therefore seem useless. Besides it remains an open question how Thoth could become the principal god of Hermopolis. In itself, however, it is not an unusual thing for a god who is universally worshipped to have a centre of his cult somewhere. For Re that was Heliopolis, for Osiris Abydos, for Hathor Dendera and for Thoth Hermopolis magna.

D) THE MOON-GOD

Thoth is the supreme moon-god. The Egyptian religion had other gods apart from Thoth who possessed a stronger or weaker affinity with the moon. First there was Khonsu. His relationship with Thoth is discussed below. Further Osiris, Min and the little-known Duau belong to this category. Other gods are occasionally related to the moon, such as Shu and Khnum.²

The multiplicity of 'moon-gods' is proof that the moon exercised

¹ K. SETHE, *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis*, p. 71.

² *La Lune, Mythes et Rites*, 1962, p. 36 sq.

great influence on the religious mind of the Egyptians, and not merely on their power of mythic imagination. The religious behaviour of the Egyptians, in particular their cult, was equally influenced by the moon, as is clearly evidenced by the numerous moon festivals on the first of the month, at full moon, on the sixth day and in the middle of the month.¹ The changing shape of the moon was followed, each new phase was celebrated and used as point of orientation. With respect to the latter it may safely be assumed that originally the phases of the moon determined their chronology, in other words that the lunar calendar was older than the solar calendar. It would even seem that the worship of the moon must have been of greater importance in the earliest period of Egyptian religion than in later days, when it was overshadowed by the cult of such mighty and popular gods as Re and Osiris. Rudiments of the originally more widespread moon worship can be discerned in the names of kings which have *Dhwtj* or the word for 'moon', *'i'h*, as component.²

A remarkable attempt to link up the lunar with the solar year probably underlies the story told by PLUTARCH in Chapter 12 of his famous work on Isis and Osiris. Rea had secretly become the consort of Kronos. The enraged Helios thereupon uttered the curse that neither in any month, nor in any year should she be able to bear a child. Hermes, who had also loved her, came to her help, however. In a game of checkers with Selene he won 1/70 of each day from this goddess. From these fractions of a day he formed 5 whole days which he added as intercalary days after the 360 days of the (lunar) year. On these days Rea's children were born : Osiris on the first, Horus on the second, Seth on the third, Isis on the fourth and Nephthys on the fifth. Osiris and Horus are said to be the children of Helios, Isis of Hermes and Seth and Nephthys of Kronos.

In order to understand the place of the moon in the cosmos, it should be remembered that the Egyptians conceived of the sky as a gigantic face which, like the human face, has two eyes. These are the sun and the moon, the right and left eye respectively. In a hymn we read : "both thy eyes move in a circle, day and night; thy right eye is the sun-disc, thy left is the moon."³

The question arising from this quotation is : what was the conception

¹ BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals*, p. 33; BONNET, *Reallexikon* p. 474.

² A. GARDINER, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 1964, p. 174.

³ H. KEES, *Aegypten. Religionsgeschichtliches Lesebuch*, 10, 1928, p. 13.

of the relationship between the moon and the god of the moon? Before answering, it should be noted that there was also a god whose name was a derivative of the word for moon ('i'h). He was therefore called 'I'h and represented the divine lunar-disc. Evidently Thoth more or less ousted this god. In their characteristic way the Egyptians tried to explain the relationship between the two gods by means of a play of words. They relate how Re let the two skies be encircled ('in'h) by the light of Thoth. Thus there came into being the 'i'h of Thoth. ¹

As for Thoth's relationship to the moon, it appears to have varied. Sometimes he was the divine moon, sometimes the god of the moon. From the viewpoint of the history of religions, this alternating relationship between a godhead and his nature-substratum is not uncommon. For instance the sky is at times worshipped as a deity, at others the god who is enthroned in the sky; at times the divine sun-disc, at others the sun-god. In the study on Hathor we have seen that there is a distinction between Nut the sky-goddess and Hathor who resides in the sky. In the passage of the sun across the sky mention is made alternatively of the sun-god and the sun-disc that moves from east to west. In a like manner Thoth is sometimes identical with the moon, and we see, for example, the moon in a barque which carries this heavenly body across the sky and which bears the inscription: "Moon, Thoth, the great god, the merciful." ² Or we read that Thoth crosses the sky like Re (Pyr. 128 a). On the other hand Thoth acts as protector of the moon. ³

A point worth special attention in this context is the relationship between Khonsu and Thoth. Khonsu, ⁴ who formed a triad with Amon and Mut at Thebes, undoubtedly is a moon-god. His name means 'the one who crosses (the sky)' and characterises him as such. It is not necessary to digress on his nature and significance. Probably he was once an important god and gradually dropped into the second rank. In any case he was eclipsed by Thoth. He is the god of chronology. Later his function was that of counsellor and healer. The latter talent probably derives from the widespread popular belief, evidently also prevalent in ancient Egypt, that the moon exercises both a good and

¹ ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 147/8.

² *Op. cit.* p. 59.

³ BOYLAN, *Thoth*, p. 68; G. NAGEL, *Le dieu Thoth d'après les textes égyptiens*, Eranos, 1942, p. 109 sq.

⁴ BONNET, *op. cit.* p. 140 sq.

evil influence on all that grows. In certain circumstances this also includes the power to heal the human body. On a stela in the temple of Khonsu at Karnak there is a very tasteful story of Khonsu's successful performance as physician to a foreign princess in Bekhten.¹ Thoth, too, possessed the power to heal, but this was only one of his many qualities. Finally with respect to the relationship Thoth-Khonsu, it may be concluded that Khonsu held his place as moon-god alongside of Thoth, but was greatly overshadowed by this mighty and so much more talented god.

Just as a sun-eye is mentioned in connection with Re, so is mention made of a moon-eye. In itself the sun-eye is constant. The moon-eye continually changes its shape. This fact has given rise to the forming of mythical conceptions about the wounding of this eye in which Thoth plays a prominent role. Their significance can most profitably be discussed within the framework of an enquiry into the function fulfilled by Thoth in the cosmos, more particularly in the service of a number of gods. The following section is devoted to this theme.

Two remarks to conclude the present section. Firstly, in the ancient world the moon-god always occupied a special place in the pantheon. He is enveloped in a veil of mystery. He is the great magician, the god who possesses profound wisdom.² Little wonder that he sometimes reveals a demoniacal streak. This leads to the second observation. In the following sections Thoth will more and more emerge as the deity who defends and restores harmony in the cosmos. It cannot be overlooked, however, that there are certain allusions to a demoniacal trait in his nature. In Pyramid Text 1271 quoted in V C it is said that Thoth "comes in his evil gait". The trenchant formulation of the texts makes it impossible to comprehend fully its exact purport. And there are other allusions, dealt with later, which rouse the suspicion that the Egyptians reckoned with an unaccountable trait in Thoth's character. For that matter Thoth was not unique in this respect, although he least of all could be expected to have demoniacal inclinations. Elsewhere mention is made of the 'evil coming' of various gods specified by name.³ The Egyptians realised that the gods were mighty beings who could bring both blessing and calamity to man.

¹ G. MASPÉRO, *Les contes populaires de l'Égypte ancienne*, p. 159 sq.; A. DE BUCK, *Egyptisch leesboek*, 1941, I, p. 72 sq.; G. ROEDER, *Religiöse Urkunden*, p. 169 sq.

² M. ELLADE, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, 1949, *Chapitre IV*: La lune et la mystique lunaire.

³ Pyr. 1264 sq.

E) THE PEACE-MAKER

Thoth owes his prominence among the numerous *dei minores* and also in the group of the *dei majores* to the fact that he fulfils an indispensable function. This activity can best be designated by the Egyptian verb *šhtp*, meaning 'to bring to rest, to satisfy, to restore harmony'. One gets the strong impression that the Egyptian was not by nature the sort of inwardly divided creature who causes unrest, sows dissension among men, and is querulous, but that he was a well-balanced person who loved peace and harmony. Songs and spells from the literature of wisdom and scenes from daily life depicted on the walls of tombs all tell us that the Egyptian knew how to enjoy the pleasure of a good and tranquil life. He abhorred the strife that rent the country. His desire was that the two lands, Northern and Southern Egypt, should be 'united', and hence that there should be a powerful government to maintain good order. On his ascension to the throne each pharaoh was expected to perform this deed of 'uniting the lands' (*sm 3 t 3wj*). Reference has already been made in a previous section to the well-known mythical conception of this deed: two gods, usually Horus and Thoth, standing on either side of the great hieroglyph *sm 3* which represents the lungs and trachea, pull the cords knotted about this sign and thus symbolise the aforesaid deed. The outcome is *htp*, 'peace'. The extent to which the Egyptians esteemed this state of harmony is evidenced by the fact that there was a god *Htp*. He resided in the land where all strife is banished, that is in the hereafter, the *šht htp*, or 'field of peace', a region depicted in the vignettes of Spell 110 of the Book of the Dead as the paradise of the deceased in the guise of a peaceful, fertile Nile landscape. In this spell the deceased takes pride in being with *Htp*. It is said of this god that "he makes peace between the two combatants (Horus and Seth)...he dispels the sorrow of the older generation, he settles the discord of the younger generation, he catches the suffering of Isis (about the death of Osiris) as though in a net."¹

The god who best promotes the state of *htp*, who performs the deed of *šhtp* in the universe is Thoth. In Pyramid Text 1465 he is therefore called "the one who signifies the peace of the gods".² There is no better way of becoming acquainted with Thoth than by determining what good deeds he does for the various gods.

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 110, 8 sq.

² SETHE, *Übersetzung und Kommentar* etc. V p. 381, 411.

a) *Thoth and Re*

There was a close connection between Thoth and Re. In the previous section we became acquainted with him as son of Re. The sun-god placed so much confidence in the capacities of Thoth that he appointed him his deputy, his vizier. The pertinent text relates how Re sent for Thoth and gave him a place of honour next himself. Thereupon Re spoke: "Thou shalt be writer in the nether-world....Thou shalt take my place as deputy, thou shalt be called Thoth substitute of Re".¹

Another text adds that he was even appointed successor to Re.² Thoth fulfilled his task so well that he was given the epithet 'the one with whose word Atum (the primeval god at Heliopolis who later acquired solar significance) is content.'³

In his office Thoth performs invaluable services for the sun-god. He is 'the perfect secretary'. It is said that his pen protects Re.⁴ Just what this expression implies is made clear in a hymn to Re which runs: "Daily Thoth writes Ma-a-t for thee."⁵ The course of the sun is not dictated by natural law. Ma-a-t, the world order, cannot be compared with the concept of a cosmic causality. Every day Thoth must determine the course of the sun so that the sun-boat may safely pursue its way. He is able to do so, because he bears the epitheton ornans: "great in magic in the boat of the millions of years (name of Re's boat)."⁶ He has the wisdom and creative power necessary to ensure the regular movement of the sun. The text quoted above continues: "(Thoth), whose spells protect the one who bore him(Re), who dispels rebelliousness and ends strife." These words signify that Thoth crushes and removes the opposition which Re encounters during his voyage. Consequently Thoth is often seen standing in the prow of the sun-boat, as for example in the vignettes of the Book of the Dead.⁷ Thoth says of himself: "I have knotted the rope of the ship (to moor the ship), I let the ferry sail, I bring the East nearer to the West."⁸ This state-

¹ ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 147/8.

² SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 154.

³ SANDER HANSEN, *Die religiösen Texte auf dem Sarg der Anchnesneferibre*, p. 79.

⁴ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 182, 2/3.

⁵ W. BUDGE, *Papyrus Ani*, 15, 9.

⁶ NAVILLE, *op. cit.* 182, 8.

⁷ Vignettes in Naville, *Todtenbuch*, Spell 100, 102.

⁸ NAVILLE, *op. cit.*, 182, 24.

ment evidently refers to the diurnal passage across the sky. Much more dangerous is the passage through the nether-world from West to East. Here Thoth's aid is really necessary. In a funerary text Thoth describes how he assists Re as follows : "I see to it that Re is at peace with Osiris (lord of the netherworld) and Osiris with Re, I ensure that he (Re) can enter the secret cave to revive the heart of the weary at heart (Osiris)." ¹ Thoth settles any discord between the two great gods and brings Re to the mysterious place where Osiris, monarch of the netherworld, resides, so that Re can renew his life. Furthermore Thoth protects the sun-boat from the enemies of Re, primarily Apap the arch-enemy. As it is said : "Thoth remains in the prow of thy ship (of Re) in order to destroy all thy enemies." ²

In yet another way Thoth makes himself useful to Re in his capacity as peace-maker. He reconciles the sun-eye and Re. The Egyptians have not made it easy for us to obtain a clear picture of the myth of the sun-eye which is discussed in III D f in connection with the sun-eye as one of Hathor's figurations. There is good reason to scrutinise this matter more closely. The difficulties referred to ensue from the fact that, firstly, only allusions to the myth occur and that, secondly, the myth of the sun-eye and that of the moon-eye are almost inextricably interwoven. The only certainty is that the sun-eye departed from Re and apparently became lost. Thoth sought and found it : "I am Thoth who wanders abroad to seek the eye for its owner (Re), I come and I have found it." ³ In a different version of the myth, Re sent out the sun-eye on a mission. ⁴ When it returned, it found another eye known as the *ꜥḥt*-eye, in its place. Thereupon the sun-eye fell into a rage. Thoth succeeded in pacifying it. As compensation for loss of honour the sun-eye was given an elevated place on Re's forehead, and so it received the function of the uraeus, which is to ward off the enemies of the divinity and consequently of the king. There can be no doubt about the fact that this story concerns the sun-eye, for in the text in question the right eye of Re is clearly mentioned. ⁵

It seems that Thoth brushed aside the hair on Re's forehead and so

¹ *Op. cit.*, 182, 6.

² ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 236.

³ H. GRAPOW, *Das 17 Kapitel des ägyptischen Totenbuches und seine religionshistorische Bedeutung*, 1912, p. 34.

⁴ NAVILLE, *op. cit.* 17, 12 sq.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

made room for the sun-eye. ¹ Thoth's deed of reconciliation is described as follows : "Thoth has returned the sacred eye, he has pacified it after being sent out by Re to search for it. It was enraged, but it was Thoth who satisfied the eye after it had given vent to its wrath." ² As its name — the eye of beauty, light, splendour — implies, the said *ꜥḥt*-eye is also a sun-eye. A text relates that Re replaced the sun-eye which departed from him with the *ꜥḥt*-eye, because he could not do without a sun-eye. ³ To understand properly these mythic events it must be remembered that the Egyptians could make associations which to our minds do not exist. This applies here in particular to the analogy between the sun-eye and the uraeus. They are identified with each other, because both have the same task of warding off and combatting the enemies of Re.

Finally a question that has not received enough attention in the diverse studies on the fragmentary statements about the sun-eye : what does this mythical episode signify ? What is the meaning of the sun-eye departing and becoming lost ? Evidently this story recounts an exceptional happening. The obvious association is an eclipse of the sun. It is common knowledge that this abnormal event gave rise to great consternation among many peoples of antiquity. The mythical imagination was stirred and so created a story embodying the significance of the strange happening. Out of emotion came the stimulus to perform certain rituals to ward off the apprehended danger. The Egyptian texts make no mention of such ceremonies. Nevertheless an eclipse of the sun must have attracted keen attention and filled the minds with religious tension. The myth of the sun-eye is the remnant of this experience. The sun-eye was imagined to have left the sun-god or to have been sent on a mission by him. During an eclipse of the sun, the moon which might be expected to appear in the twilight is equally invisible. What more natural than to think that the moon-god was going about searching for the sun-eye. And it was also a sensible thought that the enhanced brilliance of the sun after the eclipse was due to the pacifying intervention of Thoth, who succeeded in providing a place of honour for the sun-eye, embittered as it was by its eclipse and its neglect.

b) *Thoth and Ma-a-t*

Pursuing further the theme of the preceding section we arrive at

¹ Ibidem.

² W. BUDGE, *Book of the Dead I*, 421, Spell 167.

³ GRAPOW, *op. cit.* p. 31.

Ma-a-t, who is the consort of the moon-god. ¹ She is not his only partner. In Hermopolis he had *Nhm.t-ʿwꜣj* beside him. Her name means 'the rescuer of him who is robbed'. *Nhm.t-ʿwꜣj* is a vague figure with a characteristic name, one which shows she is a fitting wife of a god who must maintain justice. Secondly, Thoth is often seen in the company of Seshat, the goddess of writing. ² Since Thoth is the patron of everything pertaining to the art of writing, it is not surprising that the two deities appear together. The discussion of their joint work must be postponed till later.

First Thoth's relationship to Ma-a-t, the goddess of truth, justice, the social and cosmic order, must receive our full attention. As we have seen in the hymn to Re quoted in the previous section, Thoth actualises this order when he daily writes Ma-a-t for Re. Consequently Thoth and Ma-a-t are often seen in each other's company in the sun-boat. This is what the saying of the deceased refers to: "I have seen Horus as steersman (of the sun-boat) with Thoth and Ma-a-t on either side." ³

A detailed treatment of the significance of Ma-a-t for Re is, I believe, not relevant here. ⁴ Briefly it is as follows; Ma-a-t protects the sun-god and smooths his path; she is called his *kꜣ*, his vital power; she sustains his life, for it is said that "thy nourishment consists of Ma-a-t, thy beverage is Ma-a-t, thy bread is Ma-a-t, thy beer is Ma-a-t, thou anointest thy head with Ma-a-t, the garment of thy body is Ma-a-t." ⁵ However it does clarify Thoth's position with regard to Re if consideration is paid to two potentials often found in the sun-boat. These are *Hw* and *Šꜣj*, the creative word and the insight. A certain connection exists between these numina and Ma-a-t and hence with Thoth. ⁶ Thus it is said of the king: "*Hw* is thy mouth, *Šꜣj* is thy heart, the place of thy tongue is a temple of Ma-a-t." ⁷ The meaning of this eulogy is that, in his quality of regent, the pharaoh reflects as it were his archetype, the sun-god, creator of the All, for with the assistance of *Hw* and *Šꜣj*, who are his children, Re completed the creation. ⁸ In other words the

¹ PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography etc.* II passim.

² f.i. *op. cit.* II p. 18, 27.

³ W. BUDGE, *Papyrus Ani*, 15, 16.

⁴ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 37 sq.

⁵ A. MORET, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier*, 1912, p. 141/2.

⁶ J. ZANDER, *Das Schöpferwort im alten Ägypten*, Verbum, Essays on some aspects of the religious function of words, dedicated to Dr H.W. Obbink, 1964, p. 56 sq.

⁷ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 33.

⁸ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, p. 52 sq.

cosmos came into being through the creative word and through the wisdom of Re. Re conquered the forces of chaos ¹ and initiated Ma-a-t the world order, which henceforth prevailed unconditionally. ² We read in a sun-hymn: "Thoth and Šjꜣ are in thy retinue and Ma-a-t is with you each day." ³ Now Thoth is commissioned to maintain in actual fact this order. In this sense Thoth is the ideal partner of Ma-a-t.

This is the explanation of the nature-substratum of the relationship between Thoth and Re. But a natural-mythological explanation of divine figures never really fathoms their true essence. The Egyptians never worshipped natural elements as such, but gods who revealed themselves through the medium of cosmic elements. Hence the sun-disc is the visible symbol of Re, but the sun-god himself is a deity who transcends this nature-substratum. Similarly the sun-eye has its own personality. It is his daughter. If we bear this relationship in mind, the myth about the sun-eye, which is discussed above in II Df and W E, assumes a new aspect. The father-daughter relationship is always ambivalent: it oscillates between strong ties of affection and rebelliousness. Alienation can occur, as is related in the myth of the sun-eye. Then a good friend, such as Thoth in this case, is best able to effect a reconciliation and to restore the proper order, Ma-a-t. Perhaps this explanation sounds fantatistical and incredible. Nevertheless it is not an attempt to push such a myth into the psychological sector. This interpretation proceeds from the thought that every myth is polyvalent and also from the clear statement in the texts that "Re longed for his daughter" and therefore sent Thoth out to persuade her to return. In this mythic fact we may assume that the Egyptians recognised an eternally prevailing structure in the relationship between the generations, in this case between father and daughter. Alienation may separate them, but it is typically Egyptian to think that in the long run peace must be restored. Here once more Thoth causes Ma-a-t to triumph.

c) *Thoth and the companions: Horus and Seth.*

The texts often allude to a tremendous combat which once raged between Horus and Seth and in which Thoth played the meritorious role of peace-maker. This mythic motif has repeatedly been the subject

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 17, 3-5.

² Pyr. 265.

³ NAVILLE, *op. cit.* 15, 48.

of study. The texts in question are well-known, so there is no need here for yet another summary of this material, which contains various obscure and doubtful points. For such see the relevant literature.¹ The purport of this section is to illuminate Thoth's share in settling the quarrel. Stringency of argumentation is a prime necessity in an Egyptological investigation. This is all the more urgent since the nature of the data can be an enticement to digress. In point of fact the texts contain only allusions to the myth, of which moreover there seem to have been different versions. Furthermore account must always be taken of the Egyptian manner of religious thought, which was capable of associating gods and symbols in a confusing way. As a result it is impossible to fix one's sights on any single divine figure without finding a large portion of mythology, symbolism and cult intruding on one's field of vision. One cannot see the wood for the trees. The only way to obtain a clear insight is to seize the main thought and to pursue it consistently further. Here, too, obtains the saying that "in der Beschränkung zeigt sich der Meister". Certainly, to obtain a good understanding of the subject it is desirable and advisable to touch on a number of questions connected with the main theme of this section, but for the rest Thoth, the leading personage in this chapter, should be the only focal point of our attention.

Who were these two combatants? The Horus involved in the fight is the sky-god. Seth, a god of complicated character, could be said to be the pendant of the sky-god, because in one of his qualities he is an earth-god. His true nature will soon be disclosed. To understand properly Thoth's intervention a short sketch must be given of the course of the combat. No mention is made of the reason for the bloody conflict. Perhaps it was in the nature of Seth to act aggressively. It is also possible that the combat was an inevitability, because it was destined to be the vehicle of some cosmic necessity. In any case it is said that they became furious with each other and that they then joined in physical combat. The outcome was that Seth tore out one of Horus's eyes and that Horus removed Seth's testicles. The pyramid texts speak of: "the gouging of the eye of Horus, the ligation of the testicles of Seth" (Pyr. 1463) and say: "Horus falls because of his eye, Seth falls

¹ H. GRAPOW, *Das 17 Kapitel des ägyptischen Totenbuches und seine religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung*, 1912; G. VAN DE LEEUW, *Godsvoorstellingen in de oud-egyptische pyramidenteksten*, 1916; W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Het leven uit de dood*, 1949; J. GWYN GRIFFITHS *The Conflict of Horus & Seth*, 1960; *La lune, mythes et rites, sources orientales*, 5, 1962.

because of his testicles" (Pyr. 418). Understandably both gods suffer greatly: "Horus suffers because of his eye, Seth suffers because of his testicles". (Pyr. 594). No details are known about the mutilation suffered by Seth, but there are several versions of how Horus became mutilated, namely Seth threw dirt in the eye of Horus, he stabbed his finger in his eye, he struck his eye: the eye was wounded, the eye bled.¹

At this juncture Thoth intervenes. He does two things, he heals the wounds inflicted and he reconciles the contenders. He is able to perform the first of these two deeds, because as *wr ḥkꜣw* ('mighty in magic'), the great magician he is also physician. The process of healing is described in varying ways: (1) Thoth spits in the eye of Horus — a method of healing applied in the ancient world; (2) he returns it to Horus; (3) he makes the eye 'full'.² As for the first-mentioned method of healing, a pyramid text states that the two gods purge themselves of evil by means of their own spittle (Pyr. 850). The second measure taken by Thoth to help Horus presumes that after plucking out Horus' eye Seth ran away with it, but that Thoth succeeded in taking it from him. The texts do, indeed, mention this detail in so many words. Thoth says: "I have returned from searching for the Horus-eye, I have brought it back". Another version is: "Thoth comes after having taken the eye of Horus away from his opponent."³ The third manner of healing, the 'filling' has acquired a profounder significance than the original one, which implied that the eye was restored, for this term gave rise to what is known as the *wḏꜣt*-eye, the full, healed and intact eye. This eye became the symbol of divine life which can overcome death.⁴ The *wḏꜣt*-eye also functions in religious symbolism as amulet and, as such, is comparable to other known amulet-shaped symbols, such as *ḏḏ* meaning 'enduringness', *nḥ*, meaning 'life' and *wꜣs* meaning 'welfare'. This eye also occupies a prominent position in the cult. The bringing of the *wḏꜣt*-eye is a well-known sacrificial deed, which is carried out after the mythical example of Thoth's handing over of the eye to Horus. A fine representation of this event forms one of the illustrations accompanying a text usually named Am Duat after the opening words meaning 'that which is in Duat'. In it we see Thoth handing over the *wḏꜣt*-eye to Horus.⁵

¹ GRAPOW, *op. cit.* p. 24.

² *Op. cit.* p. 24/5.

³ H. KEES, *Aegypten*, Religionsgeschichtliches Lesebuch, 10, 1928, p. 26, 36.

⁴ KRISTENSEN, *op. cit.* p. 26 sq.

⁵ LEFÉBURE, *Tombeau de Sêti I*, 24.

In the famous text describing the festive rites to celebrate the ascension of Sesostri I, repeated mention is made of offers of varying substances, of which the mythical motivation is said to be that Thoth offered Horus his eye.¹

In the second place Thoth separates the fighting parties. Both in the Coffin Texts and in the Book of the Dead, Thoth says: "I am Thoth, the one who separated the two brothers (or companions)."² But he did more. He calmed down the two combatants and made peace between them. Mention is made of "the way Thoth went when he pacified the two contenders."³ Elsewhere Thoth says: "I have satisfied Horus, I have calmed down the two companions in the moment of their rage, I have washed off the blood, I have ended the quarrel."⁴ In the text referred to by note 2, Thoth goes on to say: "I have stopped their combat, I have put an end to their complaints".⁵

In a different tradition Geb acts as justice of the peace. According to the well-known Shabaka-text, "Geb says to Seth: go, thence, to where thou wert born (i.e. Southern Egypt), Geb says to Horus: go thence to where thy father was drowned (i.e. Northern Egypt), Geb says to Horus and Seth: I have separated you."⁶ Thus each god is despatched to his own territory. The pyramid texts therefore speak of the *i;wt*, 'districts' of Horus and Seth!⁷ The two gods are equivalent and equally necessary. There is a dualism. According to the Shabaka-text Geb later amended his decision because he regretted it. It is said that the entire kingdom was entrusted to Horus.⁸ In this passage has been discerned the influence of the Osiris myth, due to which Geb favoured Horus, son of his son Osiris. The dualism of equivalence is thus abandoned, and a different dualism is created by which Seth is branded, though not explicitly, as the evil-doer, a qualification that later bore down so heavily on him.

The obvious questions are: what is the significance of this myth and what is the importance of Thoth's intervention? Three observations might be made. Firstly there are grounds for assuming that the myth

¹ K. SETHE, *Dramatische Texte*, p. 120, 190, 192, 203.

² C.T. I, 231; BUDGE, *Book of the Dead*, I, Spell 123, 2.

³ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 75, 6.

⁴ *Op. cit.* 182, 19/20; 183, 11.

⁵ BUDGE, *op. cit.* Spell 123, 2/3.

⁶ SETHE, *Dramatische Texte*, p. 27.

⁷ VAN DER LEEUW, *op. cit.* p. 138.

⁸ SETHE, *op. cit.* p. 27/8.

in question here is a moon-myth. The Egyptians themselves remark that "the left eye (the moon) changes each month and at the middle of the month."¹ It was only natural that this metamorphosis should be conceived of as a mutilation. Who is better able to heal this wound than the moon-god himself? Hence Thoth's intervention: he makes the eye healthy and full again. A myth is always polyvalent and polyinterpretable. Therefore it can be said, secondly, that Horus and Seth represent a bipartition. This is a dualism that is visible in the juxtaposition of the kingdoms of the North and South of which Egypt was composed and that also assumes the guise of a religious polarity which premeates the entire cosmos. This is not primarily the contrast good-bad, truth-lie or injustice, for here Seth is not the absolutely evil figure. The two gods are equals, only their powers must be brought into balance with each other. Hence the dualism here could be that of life and death, which according to the Egyptian mind can be cancelled in divine life which embraces life and death. It is Thoth who achieves the cancellation of the antithesis. Thirdly, Seth deserves a moment of our attention. Not unjustly he is characterised as a 'God of confusion'.² In a later context we shall encounter him as such, partly because his role in the Osiris myth rendered him more and more a dark figure in the religious imagination of the Egyptians. There is something demoniacal in his nature. Demoniacal must not be confused with satanical. Satanical figures are concerned purely with destruction. According to P. TILICH's definition the demoniacal is "gestaltwidriges Hervorbrechen des schöpferischen Grundes in den Dingen."³ This applies to Seth as well: he has the power to create, but at the same time he destroys and in particular he creates confusion. That is why Thoth is his great opponent, for Thoth's intention is *šꜥtp*, that is to reconcile contradictory forces and to bundle them together in order to create harmony, peace and order.

d) *Thoth and Tefnet*

Thoth also plays an important role in the myth of a savage goddess who resided in the distant regions of the South and who was induced by his art of persuasion to come to Egypt. So great was his calmativ

¹ GRAPOW, *op. cit.* p. 35.

² H. TE VELDE, *Seth, God of Confusion, a Study of his Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, 1967.

³ P. TILICH, *Das Dämonische, ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte*, 1926.

effect on her that at the frontier she changed into such a benevolent and amiable goddess that she was received with jubilation and honour.

H. JUNKER reconstructed this myth from scattered passages in texts collected from the Ptolemaic temples at Philae, Komombo, Esna, Edfu, Dendera and a number of Nubian temples.¹ These texts therefore date from the latter period of the Egyptian religion. The second source of information is a demotic papyrus from the museum in Leyden, which must have been written in the Hellenistic age, although there are indications that the contents are much older.² The papyrus contains a long story in the form of a saga. In contradistinction to the myth which took place in primeval days, the events related by the saga occurred in historical surroundings.³ That is indeed the case here. The goddess who is the leading figure in the story and is called Tefnet resides in Ethiopia, where she has assumed the shape of a wild cat. Disguised as an ape Thoth goes there to persuade her to come to Egypt. Immediately at their first meeting she displays her wild nature. She threatens Thoth's life. He manages to quieten her rage by pointing out that the goddess of fate punishes every crime. Thereupon the goddess shows her willingness to listen to him as he describes the beauty of Egypt and depicts how good life there is. Nevertheless her wrath flames up now and then. Thoth succeeds in calming her down by telling the one beast fable after the other. The moral of these stories is that it is wise to maintain the common peace and that the strong never must despise the weak, because in times of need he can benefit even from the friendship of an insignificant animal. The goddess is placated with these parables of Thoth and so accompanies him willingly to Egypt, where she discards her wild nature and becomes a friendly goddess. Obviously the story about a grim goddess whom Thoth fetches from Ethiopia is used as a sort of 'Rahmenerzählung' for a series of beast fables.

The texts from the Ptolemaic temples and the demotic papyrus evidently deal with the same mythical data. The big question is what was the original purport of this myth. The temple texts and the papyrus derive from an age of strong syncretistical tendencies, when diverse goddesses were fused together. For that matter certain goddesses were also compared and identified with each other in earlier times, as is well

¹ H. JUNKER, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, Anhang zu den Abh. der kön. preuss. Ak. der Wiss. 1911.

² W. SPIEGELBERG, *Der ägyptische Mythos vom Sonnenauge*, 1917.

³ G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Phänomenologie der Religion*, 1933, § 60.

known. The point at issue is whether this goddess can be designated the sun-eye, the eye that is despatched by Re or that leaves him in anger and is retrieved by Thoth. The Ptolemaic texts especially could support this interpretation, for the goddess is in fact entitled the sun-eye. K. SETHE, who has made a profound study of this material,¹ interprets the myth in this way and is even of the opinion that he can distinguish five variations of the myth of the sun-eye.² The tenet that there were different versions of the myth of the sun-eye is undoubtedly correct. Neither can it be denied that a trace of the myth of the sun-eye is present in the Ptolemaic texts in particular. It can be discerned, *inter alia*, in the fact that as well as Thoth, Shu (the god of the air and in a sense also a sun-god) is also sent out to bring back Tefnet, who is his sister. Nevertheless it is doubtful whether the myth of the sun-eye is really referred to here. In this complex of very brief allusions to the myth, H. JUNKER has discovered other motifs, such as that of a hunter armed with a spear who subdues a wild goddess and carries her off to Egypt.³ He points out that Ethiopia is the homeland of the goddess, a land where she has lived since time immemorial, which she loves, whose beauty she praises. Egypt is completely unknown to her. She does not know the way there.⁴ She is thus a strange, alien goddess who is brought to Egypt. She is not the sun-eye who has quarreled with and consequently left her father and who must be returned to Re.

JUNKER's observation shows us the right approach to the interpretation of the myth. True, the detailed research of JUNKER and SETHE has provided the necessary insight into the traditions attached to the various temples, but this investigation must be supplemented with a religio-phenomenological analysis, which provides a better perception of the typological similarities and differences. In my opinion, two motifs can be distinguished in the myths of the sun-eye. Once these are appreciated, a new light falls on the observations in III Df and V Ea about the subject in question. The two motifs are: (1) the myth of the wrathful sun-eye, that is the scorching sun or Hathor who destroys the enemies of Re, and (2) the myth of the sun-eye that disappears

¹ K. SETHE, *Zur altägyptischen Sage vom Sonnenauge, das in der Fremde war*, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens, 1912.

² *Op. cit.* p. 33/9.

³ H. JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende*, Kaiserliche Ak. der Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse, 59 Band, 1 und 2 Abh., 1917.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 163.

because of an eclipse and is retrieved by Thoth the moon-god. The explanation given by SETHE for the disappearance of the sun-eye,¹ namely that the sun is obscured by clouds or a thunderstorm, is not very plausible, for the sky above Egypt is usually cloudless and the rainfall is negligible.²

The myth which forms the subject of investigation in the present context is indeed interwoven with the first and especially the second motif, but has essentially a different structure. It tells of a goddess of an unbridled character who is brought to Egypt and there emerges as an amiable being. It is important for the argumentation to note her country of origin. Alternatively it is called *knst*, or Nubia, *Bwgm* — a place not further specified, and *tꜣ ntr* or god's land. An attempt has been made to localise *Bwgm* as a region of Nubia. But there is no sense in doing so, for all names point in the direction of a mythical place. *Knst* signifies primarily a country in the other world and consequently became the name for Nubia.³ *Tꜣ ntr* can be compared with *hr ntr*, meaning 'necropolis'. The 'god's land' is the land where the godhead resides who is by definition of a completely different nature than man. Hence it is said that the goddess is brought from a far distant country, that is from a mythical country. That is where the wild godhead belongs, she who has received the name of Tefnet. When she enters the world of man on the frontier of Egypt, she changes into Hathor and resembles the amiable side of this goddess's character. As a savage, wrathful goddess, she originally represents the *mysterium tremendum* of the godhead. After leaving the other world she adjusts herself to the measure of man. But even after her metamorphosis she does not entirely discard her tumultuous nature. The texts relate how Thoth constantly had to pacify her.⁴

Now it is once more Thoth who performs the deed of *šhtp*, in other words who pacifies the goddess and evokes the fascinans of her nature. As moon-god he is the mysterious, but also wise god. Understandably it is precisely he who is thought capable of bridging the gap between this demoniacal goddess with her unpredictable nature and the mortals with their ordered lives who were at a loss with this irrational one.

¹ SETHE, *op. cit.* p. 38.

² Baedekers *Ägypten*, 1928, p. LXXXI; E. BANSE, *Ägypten, eine Landeskunde*, 1909, p. 8.

³ W.B. 5, 133/4.

⁴ JUNKER, *Auszug etc.* p. 34, 42, 66, 84.

An interesting and illuminating parallel with the myth of the goddess who comes from abroad is to be found in the Greek religion. That is the myth of the arrival of Apollo from the country of the Hyperboreans. This land is supposed to lie to the north of Greece, but in fact it is a mythical land that cannot be localised. It is the other world from which Apollo comes for the benefit of man. Apollo is not a 'savage' god, but rather a saviour and later a god of sober wisdom. Nevertheless his character retains a trait dangerous to man, for it is his bow-shot that never misses from afar which seals the fate of man.

e) *Thoth's assistance to Osiris and Horus*

The famous work of PLUTARCH, *Περὶ Ἰσιδος καὶ Ὀσιριδος* seems to suggest that the myth of Osiris can be found as a continuous narrative in the Egyptian texts. This is a misleading representation of the facts. The texts contain nothing more than allusions to this mythical event. Moreover both these references to the myth and what is known as the Osiris mysteries contain diverse contradictions that are sometimes difficult to reconcile with each other.¹

Since the Egyptians were diffident about using the words 'death' and 'to die', the tragic fate of Osiris is described in euphemistic terms already in the Pyramid Texts and in later ones as well.² The expression used is "a great one has fallen on his side" (pyr. 721). To lie on one's side, especially the left side, means to be dead. That Seth murdered Osiris is not stated in plain words, merely that "Osiris was laid on his side by his brother Seth" (pyr. 1500). The murder occurred at a place called *Ndi.t*: "his brother Seth cast him to earth in *Ndi-t*" (pyr. 1256). But there are also allusions to death by drowning, for mention is made of "the place where thou art drowned" (pyr. 24, 615, 766). This idea is perpetuated in a hymn to Osiris, which relates how Isis searches for her murdered husband and brings his body ashore after discovering that he has evidently been drowned.³ Death by drowning also occurs in the renowned Shabaka text in which Geb, who separates the battling Horus and Seth, says to Horus: "go to the place where your father has been drowned."⁴ Since the purpose of this paragraph is to illuminate the figure of Thoth and to accentuate his role in the Osiris myth and

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Isis and Nephthys as wailing women*, The Sacred Bridge, 1963.

² G. VAN DE LEEUW, *Godsvoorstellingen in de oud-aegyptische pyramidenteksten*, 1916.

³ E. LEDRAIN, *Les monuments égyptiens de la bibliothèque nationale I*, 1879, pl. 22.

⁴ K. SETHE, *Dramatische Texte zu altaegyptischen Mysterienspielen*, 1928, p. 27.

not to present a new analysis of the Osiris myth, no attempt will be made to reconcile the two versions of the death of Osiris, by murder and by drowning.

In any case it is clear that the dead Osiris is found in *Ndi.t*, or in a place called *Ghs-t*, sometimes by Geb (pyr. 1033), sometimes by Horus (pyr. 1799) and sometimes by Isis, who is usually accompanied by her sister Nephthys (pyr. 1008, 1255, 2144).

This is the moment when Thoth appears on the scene and lends his indispensable assistance. At least that is the main trend of the texts. It must be admitted, however, that there are vague allusions to co-operation between Thoth and Seth and a rather hostile or indifferent attitude on the part of Thoth towards Osiris. Thus in Pyramid Text 163 d these two gods are called brothers who did not weep for Osiris.¹ This text and another similar passages are so obscure that no clear tradition about Thoth's hostile attitude towards Osiris can be reconstructed from them. In consequence of what was said in V D about the demoniacal trait in the character of the moon-god Thoth, it could be suggested that here we have an echo of the realisation that, in spite of the charitable assistance lent by Thoth to gods and mortals, he remains a deity insofar as his behaviour is occasionally contrary to what human rationality and ethics would expect. On the whole Thoth is the faithful assistant of Osiris and Horus. As the wise god who knows the art of healing he helps Isis and Nephthys in their efforts to revive Osiris. Understandably the sisters give voice to their grief. Their lament, which is ritualised in the Osiris worship, is both an outpouring of sorrow and a 'carmen', a conjuration employed by the two goddesses to revive their brother.² In his own way Thoth participates in their activity. He brings sweet air, the fresh north wind, to the nostrils of Osiris and thus gives him new life,³ for the cooling north wind was looked upon as the breath of life in Egypt. Furthermore he recites the ritual for opening the mouth,⁴ which was also read for the departed, and to this end he uses the instrument required to give Osiris back his ability to speak and thus to live and to utter words charged with power.⁵ Together with Horus he raises Osiris from his side and makes him stand up (Pyr. 956

¹ K. SETHE, *Übersetzung und Kommentar etc.* I p. 62, 70

² BLEEKER, *op. cit.*

³ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 183, 2 sq., 44.

⁴ E. OTTO, *Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual*, I, II, 1960.

⁵ J. ZANDEE, *An ancient Egyptian Crossword Puzzle*, 1966, p. 60 sq.

et seq.). By virtue of his magic word he makes Osiris a *ḥw*, a blessed departed, a being of light, and he ensures Osiris of eternal life.¹ He is also present when Anubis mummifies Osiris and supervises this process.²

The last statement once again evokes one of those questions which always arise when the passages in the texts relating to the fate of Osiris are compared and critically analysed. The question is: how can the statement that Osiris was resurrected to new life be reconciled with the other statement that his body was mummified in the same way as that of one who has departed forever? Perhaps it is possible to harmonise these two pronouncements by assuming that his body remains mummified, but that he, himself, resides as *ḥw* in the realm of the dead, where according to the well-known version he is the monarch of the dead and chief judge at the judgement of the dead. The scope of the present study admits of only a reference to, and not a further perusal of this question. The less so, since Osiris is a complex figure and, moreover, appears in two contradistinctive configurations, the one as cosmic power, as god of vegetation, water, the earth and the other as a god of kingly demeanour. A well-known moot point is whether Osiris is a personified natural force or a deified, prehistorical king. The very fact that this question can arise betrays inconsequences in the mythic tradition concerning Osiris. It also substantiates the accuracy of the observations on the character of the Egyptian myth made in I B 4.

Equally inconsequent is the intervention of Horus on behalf of his father immediately following the latter's death, for the usual version, alluded to in both the Pyramid Texts (pyr. 632, 1635) and in later texts, is that Isis conceived Horus of the dead Osiris. According to a later rendering, Horus was born in the papyrus groves of the Delta under the protection of Thoth and Amon-Re.³ Isis is said to have protected her son against any assaults by Seth by keeping him hidden in the marshy region until he grew up to be a man. During this difficult time Thoth helped her in word and deed by comforting and counselling her, by banishing the poison of the scorpion, a creature that can be said to be the tool of Seth, by which Horus had apparently become infected.⁴ In the text of the rituals for the ascension of the pharaoh to the throne, Thoth announces

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 60.

² E.A. WALLIS BUDGE, *Osiris, The Egyptian Religion of Resurrection*, 1901, I p. 280.

³ *Op. cit.* I. 301.

⁴ A. KLASSENS, *A Magical Statue Base*, Soele Behague in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden, 1952.

explicitly that he reared Horus so that he might avenge his father.¹ The idea that nevertheless Horus was able to take action immediately upon the death of his father was probably based on the image of Horus as the true and faithful son who defends his father and his rights and punishes his assassin. There are several allusions to this role of Horus in the Pyramid Texts (pyr. 592, 691, 1685, 1683, 1712, 1976, 1980). Spell 173 of the Book of the Dead is wholly devoted to this theme : in it Horus ennumerates all the good deeds he has performed for the sake of his father.

As defender of his father, Horus metes out to Seth the punishment he deserves (pyr. 587, 653). He avenges his father (pyr. 1685). It appears that Seth did not carry out his evil deed single-handed. He had accomplices. To subdue them Horus calls on the assistance of Thoth, the dread avenger of injustice (pyr. 2213). Thoth whets his knife to destroy the enemies (pyr. 962). He ensnares the evildoer with his lasso.² He seizes and decapitates the archenemy (pyr. 635).³

For the rest it is not at all clear when this punishment was meted out. In the Pyramid Texts mention is made of a law suit in which both parties, Osiris and Seth, must appear before the judge, that is Ma-a-tj, or the double truth, before Geb or before a judicial tribunal consisting of the ennead, and Seth is pronounced guilty. The words of the verdict have been handed down in the Pyramid Texts as follows : "guilty is Seth, righteous is Osiris in the mouth of the gods." (pyr. 1556). In this rendering of the story Seth is the passive accused whose guilt is so obvious that he is convicted without difficulty. There are, however, indications that Seth took action and preferred a charge. The gist of the charge is rather obscure. It could be that he challenged the throne Osiris received from Geb ; it could also be that he threw doubts on the legality of Horus' birth. The latter view is to be found in Chapter 19 of Plutarch. It would be logical for Seth to be punished as a consequence of his condemnation.

These uncertainties give rise to a new question : were the charges against Osiris and Horus dealt with in one and the same court session, or were there two sittings ? In any case it is clear that the rights of Osiris were recognised : "Osiris, thou art the oldest son of Geb, his heir" (pyr. 1814). Thoth plays an active role in this lawsuit. In the above

¹ SETHE, *Dramatische Texte etc.* p. 129.

² NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 17, 65.

³ ALLEN, *Book of the Dead*, spell 134.

mentioned text about the judgment before the double ennead it is said that Thoth appears on the scene just as the proceedings are about to commence. Together with Horus he raises the dead Osiris, and it is he who sees to it that this god is able to appear before the court (pyr. 956). Elsewhere is stated that the gods are satisfied about "the very great word that went out of the mouth of Thoth on behalf of Osiris" (pyr. 1521 et seq.). This statement must refer either to Thoth's plea in defence of Osiris, or to the formulation of the verdict given by Thoth. This interpretation of the lapidary Pyramid Texts is supported by the ever-recurring passages in certain spells of the Book of the Dead, (18, 20) in which the deceased requests Thoth to vindicate him just as he once vindicated Osiris. Here Thoth clearly acts as Osiris' advocate. The said texts in the Book of the Dead are interesting in two respects : (1) they mention a great number of lawcourts in various cities before which the legal proceedings are supposed to have been held, and (2) they contain allusions to details of the myth and to rituals not mentioned elsewhere. Reference is made to the night in which the weeping Isis kept wake over her brother (19, 11) or in which she was awakened by the weeping of her brother (18, 17), the night in which the *dd*-pillar was erected (20, 4), or the great ploughing of the land took place (20, 7). To pursue this matter further would be to digress from our argument. In any case it is evident that, as advocate of Osiris, Thoth fulfilled an extremely important function in the legal proceedings which have acquired a complicated character in the texts quoted. As for the vindication of Osiris, which is the prototype of the vindication of the dead, the significance of this will be discussed further in a later section dealing with Thoth's care for the dead.

The proceedings against Horus are also resolved in his favour. It is said that "Horus is the heir of his father" (pyr. 316). This theme is further elaborated in the Osiris hymn mentioned above.¹ According to the version given in this song, the proceedings did not take place until Horus had reached manhood. Then it is Isis who takes up the matter. She brings Horus into the chamber of Geb, where the ennead led by Re is assembled, in order to obtain justice for her son. The divine court does indeed recognise the right of Horus and awards him the inheritance and the dignity of his father, to the joy of the gods and the people for thus had Ma-a-t triumphed. Apparently Re formulated the verdict. Thoth was also present at these legal proceedings and may

¹ E. LEDRAIN, *op. cit.*

be assumed to have acted as advocate. In any case he acted as clerk of the court, for we read that "Thoth writes it down" (i.e. the favourable outcome of the proceedings for Horus). Osiris is urged to rejoice at the verdict. In other texts, such as Spell 19 of the Book of the Dead, Horus is also declared the heir of his father, apparently under the tacit assumption that Thoth used his influence decisively in this matter. Elsewhere it is said that Thoth allots Horus the thrones of Geb. It is true that Seth is condemned and punished, but his evil power is not broken forever.¹ That is the theme of another number of well-known texts which paint Seth as a sort of Satan figure. A dramatic text from the temple at Edfu sings of Horus' struggle against Seth and the defeat of the latter god. Thoth escorts the militant deeds of Horus and praises the day on which the victory is fought out.² From the Jumilhac Papyrus it can be ascertained that Thoth repeatedly pronounces magic formulas to defend Horus, and that as a result Seth falls powerless to the ground, senseless and deprived of his manly strength.³

The conclusion must be that Thoth offered his inestimable assistance to Osiris and Horus. He helped to revive Osiris. He acted as Osiris' advocate during the trial this god had to undergo and ensured for him his vindication, his victory. Thoth assisted Isis to rear Horus, had an active share in the proceedings in which Horus was allocated the inheritance of his father, punished Seth or helped Horus to punish his enemy and with his magic spells constantly protected Horus against the assaults of the implacable Seth. In doing so he practised the work of *šhṭp*, that is he restored order and brought harmony in the world.

f) *The legislator*

In two funerary texts Thoth formulates his commission and activity as legislator and judge as follows: "I, Thoth, am the eminent writer, pure of hands... the writer of the truth (ma-a-t), whose horror is the lie... the lord of the laws.... I am the lord of ma-a-t, I teach ma-a-t to the gods, I test (each) word for its veracity...I am the leader of the sky, the earth and the nether-world."⁴ "I, Thoth, am the protector of the weak and of him whose property is violated."⁵

¹ C.T. I, 43, 179.

² E. DRIOTON, *Le texte dramatique d'Edfou*, 1948.

³ J. VANDIER, *Le papyrus Jumilhac*

⁴ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 182, 2 sq.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 183, 43.

In these two quotations Thoth presents himself as legislator and upholder of Ma-a-t. Again it must be remembered that Ma-a-t is a notion susceptible of several interpretations. Ma-a-t is the exponent of the ancient concept of the world and society in which religion and the diverse cultural regions are integrated to form a unity. Ma-a-t means severally truth, justice, order in society, cultic order, world order. Thoth actualises Ma-a-t. He teaches the gods Ma-a-t. He is the lord of the laws. In view of the fact that Ma-a-t encompasses world and life, Thoth is as "lord of the laws" not only legislator in the strict sense of the word, but also criminal judge. He also has the dignity of 'cultural hero' and acts further as priest and physician.

An important task in the cosmos is ascribed to Thoth in the remarkable text which contains what is usually called a 'logos doctrine'. It is the Shabaka text referred to above in which praise of Ptah of Memphis as creator of the world and lord of the gods is proclaimed.¹ According to this text the creation of the world took place because a thought arose in the heart of the deity and the tongue uttered this thought. The thought and the word of the tongue are personified by Horus and Thoth respectively. This 'word' should be understood in the ancient sense as a pronouncement endowed with creative power. Thoth is the word of the creator-god. The word — the text goes on to say — is active in all living creatures: the gods, the people, the cattle, the reptiles. The word brings forth all forms of food and nourishment. It is the foundation of justice. It is the motivation for all forms of labour and for diverse crafts. It sanctions the domain of the cities and the nomes. It is the meaning of the cult with all its sanctuaries and sacrifices. Thoth is therefore the safeguard and guardian of the regulations of creation. This thought is trenchantly expressed as follows in a hymn to Thoth: "the legislator in heaven and on earth; he who sees to it that the gods remain within the limits of their competency, each guild fulfils its obligations and the countries know their frontiers and the fields their appurtenances."² Truly a sort of omniscience and a decisive voice in the chapter of the gods are ascribed to Thoth when it is said that "without his knowledge nothing can be done among gods and people."³

In order to safeguard order in the cosmos Thoth pronounces his

¹ SETHE, *Dramatische Texte*, p. 50 sq.

² B. TURAJEFF, "Zwei Hymnen an Thoth," *Z.Ä.S.* 33, 1895 Hymne A.

³ ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 56.

annihilating judgment on the enemies of Re, Osiris and Horus.¹ We have already seen how he protects Re against his opponents during his passage through the nether-world. It is Thoth, too, who combats Seth, the murderer of Osiris, and his followers² and who imposes on Seth the humiliating punishment of having to carry Osiris on his back.³ In general Thoth exercises the office of criminal judge. The Pyramid Texts mention that he whets his knife in order to be able to cut off the heads of the enemies and to remove their hearts (pyr. 962). The sickle-shaped moon probably prompted the idea that Thoth wields a particularly sharp knife.⁴ Thoth is called the avenger (pyr. 2213). Thoth is adjured to spare no one who has hated the king (pyr. 1336).

This means that Thoth makes justice triumph in the world of man as well. In a hymn he is praised as "the one who loves justice (ma-a-t), who has justice done to him who practises justice."⁵ On the other hand he punishes offences against honesty and truth. Penitently a man chastised by Thoth confesses: "I am a man who swore a false oath on the moon... he made me experience the greatness of his power in the sight of the entire land."⁶ This confession implies that Thoth punished perjury so severely that it was discernible to all.

This instance inevitably makes one wonder how matters stood in ancient Egyptian society with regard to the observance of the principles of justice. Information on this point is scarce.⁷ Two characteristics of the body politic give some idea of the extent to which the rules of law actually prevailed. In the first place ancient Egypt was an agrarian country and as such could only continue to exist if the property and the rights of every citizen were respected and if all inhabitants of the kingdom co-operated for the common welfare. The texts state emphatically, for example, that cadastral surveys of the fields were carried out after every inundation. Any alteration in the boundaries of a field was therefore reckoned to be a serious case of fraud. A dead man who had to appear before Osiris in the court of the dead pleaded not guilty to this

¹ L. SPELEERS, *Le Papyrus de Nefer Renpet*, 1917, p. 81 sq.; J. ASSMANN, *Liturgische Lieder an den Sonnengott*, Untersuchungen zur altägyptischen Hymnik I, 1965, p. 308.

² KEES, *Aegypten*, p. 27.

³ SETHE, *Dramatische Texte*, p. 106.

⁴ H. KEES, "Zu den ägyptischen Mondsagen," *Z.Ä.S.* 60, p. 1 sq.

⁵ ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 55.

⁶ *Op. cit.* p. 59.

⁷ A. ERMAN, *Aegypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum*, 1923, p. 94 sq.

crime. ¹ In the second place it must be remembered that the Egyptian state was rigidly organised with at its head the pharaoh, who bore the aureole of divine son and possessed unlimited power, especially in the Old Kingdom. Usually an absolute sovereign abuses his power, but the pharaoh was neither a despot nor a dictator of the modern stamp. No matter how self-willed or imperious he might be, he could never shirk his duty to rule the country according to Ma-a-t the godly order. ² Extortion and fraud naturally occurred in ancient Egypt, as is witnessed by the eloquent farmer's renowned complaints, even though the exhaustiveness of his lament is more of a literary motif than a recording of real events. ³ Other texts give a gloomy account of the unreliability of people and the triumph of injustice. ⁴ But these are voices heard in a period of social disorder such as Egypt passed through several times. In normal times the government exercised a severe control over its civil servants. In their epitaphs higher and lower officials pride themselves on having been beyond reproach in the fulfilment of their duties. ⁵

The ethic ideal which lies behind such statements is that of *ma-a-tj*, the just man. Whosoever was 'a man of *ma-a-t*', could say of himself: "I am a servant who is of service to his lord... a witness to the truth, content only with the justice that hates injustice". He could describe his integrity by declaring in the words of the popular figure of speech that he was "more accurate than the pointer of the scales, the very image of the balance". His readiness to help and his impartiality were reflected in the assurance that he was "a protector of the hard-pressed, a rescuer of him who had no rescuer; who sent two people home satisfied with his judgment." ⁶

Regardless of any boasting and self-exaltation in such statements, there is evidence that the government officials took their duties seriously. When they were installed in office, the fundamental rules of justice and humanity were drilled into them, as is evidenced by the text dealing with the installation of a vizier of the 18th Dynasty. ⁷ The future vizier is told that his office "is not sweet but bitter", for

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 125, Einleitung 16.

² BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 32 sq.

³ F. VOGELSANG, *Kommentar zu den Klagen des Bauern*, Sethe, Unters.Band 6, 1913; A. ERMAN, *Die Literatur der Aegypter*, 1923, p. 157 sq.

⁴ ERMAN, *op. cit.*, II C Betrachtungen und Klagen.

⁵ BLEEKER, *op. cit.* p. 27/8.

⁶ *Op. cit.* p. 28/9

⁷ K. SETHE, *Die Einsetzung des Viziers unter der 18e Dyn.*, Untersuchungen, V, 1912.

he must uphold justice without discrimination. He may "exercise no consideration for monarchs or officials and may make not one single man a slave". If anyone approaches him with a petition, no matter who it is, he must see to it that the matter is dealt with according to law and order. A vizier is expected to practise justice. In the eyes of all people he must decide in accordance with the truth, for his court of law is, as it were, the chamber of the double Ma-a-t where the judgment of the dead took place.

Of course not every government official kept to these instructions. The fact that they were promulgated is, however, proof that an endeavour was made to make Egypt a constitutional state. The purpose of this digression is to lend greater emphasis to the idea that Thoth is "the lord of the laws" who sees to it that "every guild fulfils its obligations, the countries know their frontiers and the fields their appurtenances", as the above-quoted text so eloquently puts it. The tangible form of these 'laws' is to be found in the instructions to the vizier, in the ideal of the *ma-a-tj* and in the official conduct set forth in the texts.

Thoth's function as 'cultural hero' can also be reckoned among his activities as legislator. In the study of the history of religions this term is used to denote a divine or semi-divine figure who is worshipped as the founder of culture.¹ The ancient people looked upon culture as such a priceless possession, such an ingenious creation, that they reckoned it to be a gift of the gods and not a human product. Thoth helped to lay the foundations of culture, for "he bestowed the language and the writings."² As regards the language, he gave the people not only this means of communication which distinguishes them from animals, but he also created diverse languages. A hymn says: "Hail to thee, Moon-Thoth, who made different the tongue of one country from another."³ From this eulogy we can infer that the diversity of languages was looked upon as an enrichment of cultural life rather than an obstacle to communication between the various peoples. Above all writing was esteemed the great gift of Thoth. A generation so used to writing as ours can hardly appreciate the great respect in which writing is held by illiterate people. They consider the art of writing a divine faculty. In certain myths of creation it is therefore said that the godhead 'wrote'

¹ A. VAN DEURSEN, *Der Heilbringer*, 1931.

² TURAJEFF, *op. cit.* A.

³ J. ČERNÝ, "Thoth as Creator of Languages," *J.E.A.* 34, 1948 p. 121.

the world. ¹ Now it was Thoth who gave man this faculty. He was held to be the inventor of the hieroglyphic signs. It is possible to speak of 'a letter in the writing of Thoth'. ² Thoth himself acted as secretary for Re and the gods as a whole. In the story of the lengthy proceedings between Horus and Seth he is constantly being called on to help whenever letters have to be written e.g. at Re's request he writes one letter to Neith and two to Osiris. ³ Often he is portrayed in the act of writing. ⁴ Thus Thoth is the patron of clerks, who accordingly held him in great esteem. No clerk would ever forget to make a little libation from his water bowl to Thoth before commencing work. ⁵ The clerks were very proud of their profession. Thus a poet says to Thoth :

"Thou letter-writer of the ennead, great one who is in Hermopolis,
come to me to lead me,
to let me be expert in thine office.
Thine office is more beautiful than all other offices.
it makes (the people) great." ⁶

In particular Thoth is the inventor of the *mdw ntr*, the sacred literature written in hieroglyphics. ⁷ Mention is made of "the hieroglyphic writings, the books of Thoth." ⁸ The writers of "The House of Life" are especially under the supervision of Thoth. ⁹ Varying interpretations are given to the purpose and function of this building. Some Egyptologists see "the House of Life" as a training college, even as a sort of university devoted entirely to the composition and study of books. This is a misconception. Certainly the production of sacred writings was one of the tasks of the writers of this institution. They also took part in learned discussions held there. But their task was more comprehensive. They were consulted on matters of medicine and magic. They could decide how the titles of gods and kings should be formulated.

¹ W.B. KRISTENSEN, *Symbol en Werkelijkheid*, 1962, p. 114 sq.

² SANDMAN HOMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 169.

³ The Contendings of Horus and Seth (A.H. GARDINER, *Late-Egyptian Stories*, Bibliotheca aegyptica I. p. 37 sq.); G. ROEDER, *Mythen und Legenden um ägyptischen Gottheiten und Pharaonen*, 1960 p. 35 sq.

⁴ f.i. PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography*, II p. 16, 27, 155, 183, V 227.

⁵ ALLEN, *Book of the Dead*, Spell 94; H. SCHÄFER, *Miscellon*, Z.Ä.S. 36, 1898, p. 147; A. SCHARFF, *Ein Denkstein der römischen Kaiserzeit aus Achmin*, p. 105.

⁶ Anast. V, 9, 2 sq.; ERMAN, *Die Literatur der Ägypter*, p. 377.

⁷ W.B. 2, 180.

⁸ ALLEN, *Book of the Dead*, 68, 10.

⁹ A.H. GARDINER, *The House of Life*, J.E.A. XLII.

They interpreted texts and determined the order of festivals. It is doubtful whether "the House of Life" had a library, though certain temples are known to have had one, for example the Hathor temple at Dendera. Just how the said books were stored is not known for certain. ¹ In any case Thoth supervised this business.

An important genre of sacred literature ascribed to Thoth comprised the rituals of the cult. Hence it is not surprising that the cult itself was accounted part of his activities. Certain sacrificial rituals are said to be performed "according to the writing that Thoth made for Osiris in the house of god's book." ² More than once Thoth acts as leader of the rituals, for instance at the founding of a temple or at the celebration of the Osiris mysteries as at Abydos in the days when Ichernofret, a courtier of Sesostriis III, was in charge. The text, which in the line in question shows certain lacunae, gives the positive impression that Thoth fulfilled an important role in the ritual passage of the boat of Osiris. ³ It is evident that in such cases Thoth performed the priestly service. Literally it is said that he reads out the ritual. ⁴ The text containing the lament of Isis and Nephthys about their murdered brother states: "Thoth recites thine (Osiris) hymns and invokes thee with his spells." ⁵ Thoth also had to do with the founding of temples, for mention is made of a temple "which Ptah built with his fingers and which Thoth founded." ⁶

Finally it may be recalled that mention has already been made in the previous discussion of Thoth as doctor. The Metternich stele is devoted to this theme ⁷ and contains Thoth's spells against poisonous animals. We read that "Thoth comes, furnished with magic power, to charm the poison so that it may not gain power over any of the limbs of the sick one." Thoth himself says: "at Re's command I have come from the sky to protect you day and night on your sickbed". Thoth can practise the art of healing, because he has power over the forces which promote fertility in nature and the world of man. He banishes darkness and

¹ C.J. BLEEKER, *Religious Tradition and Sacred Books in Ancient Egypt*, Holy Book and Holy Tradition, 1968.

² S. SCHOTT, "Die Opferliste als Schrift des Thoth," *Z.Ä.S.* 90, 1963, p. 103.

³ H. SCHÄFER, *Die Mysterien des Osiris in Abydos unter König Sesostriis III*, 1904.

⁴ KEES, *Aegypten*, p. 30, 39, 42.

⁵ R.O. FAULKNER, *The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys*, *Mélanges Maspéro* I, p. 337 5, 11.

⁶ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *op. cit.* p. 20.

⁷ G. ROEDER, *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Ägypten*, 1923, p. 82.

clouds and gives Osiris the sweet air of the north wind.¹ There are indications that a certain degree of control over the Nile floods was ascribed to Thoth.² Of interest is the pronouncement that "*Šꜣj* and *Rnn.t* are created by what he has done."³ *Šꜣj* is destiny in both the favourable and the unfavourable sense of the word. Placed in juxtaposition to *Rnn.t*, the nurse or upbringer, the goddess of the harvest, the weaver who, as such, determines the course of things, *Šꜣj* understandably acquires a favourable meaning. *Šꜣj* and *Rnn.t* are numina who determine fate. Here they are in the service of Thoth. It is a common phenomenon that influence on fertility is ascribed to the moon-god.⁴ Thoth also has that power and is therefore physician. But his influence goes deeper than that of the doctor who cures patients individually. Thoth's 'medical' care has the added dimension of predestination.

g) *Thoth and the king*

It lies in the nature of things that, as legislator, Thoth is concerned with the pharaoh, who as supreme authority is responsible for the maintenance of Ma-a-t in society. Although Thoth always remains in the background while the pharaoh governs, there are moments when he appears before the footlights.

In the first place Thoth takes action before and after the birth of a royal child, who according to the royal ideology is a scion of the union between the deity and the queen.⁵ The famous texts and representations in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari depict this event most clearly and beautifully.⁶

It is Thoth who escorts Amon when this god carries out his plan to go to queen Ahmose and to unite with her. In the corrupt text alongside of this scene, Thoth apparently gives Amon permission to approach her.⁷ This unique celebration of marriage must evidently be carried out according to the order of which Thoth is the guarantor. Then

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 182, 5.

² *La lune*, p. 34.

³ C.E. SANDER-HANSEN, *Die religiösen Texte auf dem Sarg der Anchnesneferibre*, 1967, p. 138.

⁴ M. ELIADE, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, 1949, p. 148 sq.

⁵ C.J. BLEEKER, *The Position of the Queen in Ancient Egypt*, *The Sacred Bridge*, 1959.

⁶ E. NAVILLE, *Deir el-Bahari II*, 1896.

⁷ *Op. cit.* pl 47.

Hathor and Khnum appear on the scene. Khnum is commissioned to form Hatshepsut and her *kꜣ*. Hathor is to assist the queen during parturition and to suckle the child. Thereupon Thoth speaks to Ahmose, proclaiming the titles of the child that is expected. After this the child is born.¹ Finally Thoth is once again seen, this time with Amon, and the two gods sit facing each other with the newly-born child and the *kꜣ* in their hands. Now the future of Hatshepsut must be determined, and in this decision Thoth in the first instance has a voice.²

Thoth therefore guarantees the legitimacy of the king. It is he who officially announces the death of the old king (pyr. 1336) and who proclaims the divine resolution that recognises the newly-crowned king as legal successor to the dead pharaoh.³ He also establishes the titles of the king. It is common knowledge that in later times the pharaoh had five official titles, which were supplemented by poetic surnames to form an impressive collection of epitheta ornantia, far surpassing the series of titles born by modern princes.⁴ In point of fact the term '*epitheta ornantia*' is not quite accurate, for in ancient days a title was not a fine embellishment, but a rendering of the title-wearer's being, and in the case of the pharaoh it was also a definition of the task imposed on him as monarch and consequently a designation of the policy to be followed by him. It is Thoth who supervised the determination of these titles.⁵ In yet another respect Thoth determines the course of the monarch's life. With the assistance of Seshat, goddess of the art of writing, he records the years of the king and in doing so permits him to celebrate the *hꜣb šꜣd* many times.⁶ A testimonial of this is to be found in a text in the temple at Esna. S. SAUNERON has translated this passage as follows :

"Je (Thoth) suis le scribe, qui compte le temps de vie à son gré.

J'ai pris ma palette

j'ai saisi mon calame,

et j'ai inscrit pour toi (pharaon) des fêtes jubilaires

en très grand nombre,

¹ *Op. cit.* pl. 48.

² *Op. cit.* pl. 54.

³ H.W. FAIRMAN, *The Kingship Rituals of Egypt*, Myth, Ritual and Kingship, edited, by S.H. HOOKE, 1958 p. 7 sq.

⁴ G. J. THIERRY, *De religieuze betekenis van het koningschap*, I. De Titulatuur, 1913.

⁵ KEES, *Götterglaube*, p. 87.

⁶ G. NAGEL, *Le dieu Thoth d'après les textes égyptiens*, Eranos 1942, p. 109 sq.



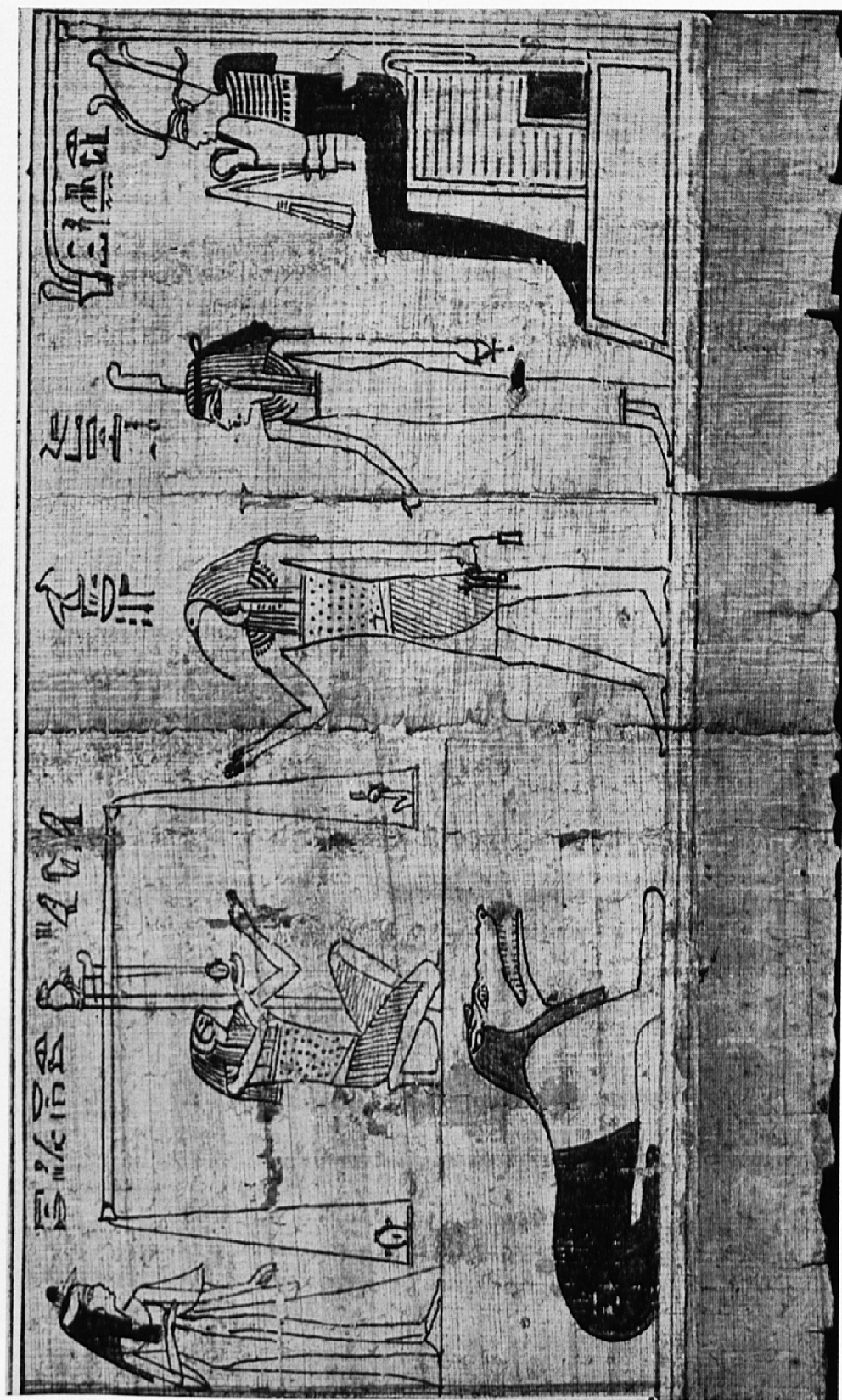
a



b

IIIa. Hathor. (Statuette in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden)

IIIb. Thoth. (Chr. Desroches-Noblecourt, Ch. Kuentz, *Le Petit Temple d'Abu Simbel*, II, Pl. LXIX.



IV. The Judgment of the Dead. (M. Heerma van Voss, Zwischen Grab und Paradis, 1971, Pl. 14).

O mon fils Pharaon, vivant à jamais.
J'engistre des royautés à ton nom
pour toute la durée de l'éternité." ¹

This assurance may have the form of the *pia vota*, but in point of purpose, it contains a recognition of the fact that Thoth determines the length of the pharaoh's life. Furthermore Thoth and Seshat establish the annals, in other words they mark out the course of his administration. Naturally Thoth also fulfils the role of legislator with regard to the pharaoh. Menes, the first king, is said to have received his laws from Thoth. ²

It is not surprising that the pharaoh models himself on Thoth. He is praised because he "lays down laws like Thoth." ³ He is called "the good god, the heir of Thoth, who destroys what is evil and does what is true," ⁴ "who speaks justice like Thoth." ⁵ He is competent to do so, for it can be said of him that he is "excellent of understanding like Thoth; he has penetrated into the annals like the maker thereof (Thoth) having examined the writings of the House of Life." ⁶

Thoth does not desert the king after completing the rituals of his birth and coronation. He escorts the monarch and looks after his well-being in the sense that, together with Horus, he repeatedly renews his vitality. There are innumerable representations of the two gods standing on either side of the pharaoh and sprinkling him with the water of life, which consists of jets formed by the sign of life, 'nh. ⁷ In this ritual Thoth has taken the place of Seth, who more and more has become the evil-doer. Here Horus and Thoth represent Northern and Southern Egypt and hence the entire country. Egypt as a whole expresses its wish that the pharaoh may be blessed.

h) *Thoth assists the deceased*

A mythic-ritual pattern is discernible in the assistance offered by Thoth to the deceased. The care given to the dead by Thoth is entirely in accordance with the assistance he gave to Osiris. In the funerary

¹ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, p. 219.

² J. BERGMAN, *Ich bin Isis*, 1968, p. 172, 234.

³ MARIETTE, *Dendérah*, I 57; II, 26.

⁴ *Op. cit.* II, 58 b.

⁵ *Op. cit.* I 68 b.

⁶ GARDINER, *The House of Life*, p. 62.

⁷ f.i. PORTER and MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography II*, 57, 81, 147.

texts the deceased repeatedly appeals to Thoth to guarantee him a blessed and continued existence in after-life by rendering him the same service he did for Osiris.

So Thoth tends the body of the deceased in a manner similar to that in which Osiris was tended under his supervision and with his co-operation. Thoth 'unites' the deceased (pyr. 639, 830). This term assumes that the body of the deceased had fallen apart, just as the body of Osiris was rent apart by Seth. In particular Thoth is said to give back the deceased's head (pyr. 10). This 'reunion' of the body is a prerequisite for continued existence. Hence it is important that Thoth gives the deceased a heart in his breast.¹ He also gives him the Horus-eye and makes him live (pyr. 830). He washes the feet of the deceased (pyr. 1247). He brings his magic power to open the mouth of the deceased so that he can speak once more.² Thoth hands him the green stone,³ which is probably the stone of life, since green is the colour of life. He protects the deceased⁴ by putting his arm around him (pyr. 1570) and by placing his *ḥw*, his power or magic property, behind him.⁵ Thoth, with whose 'words the gods are content' and whom the deceased can therefore trust completely, is the conductor of the funerary rites performed to safeguard the afterlife of the deceased.⁶

Thoth also acts as psychopomp. He carries the deceased to heaven on his wings (pyr. 387, 595, 1377). He announces the arrival of the deceased (pyr. 157). He sees to it that the deceased is included among the passengers of Re's boat and that he is enrolled as one of the crew when he reboards the boat again after having left it.⁷ To be a passenger in the boat of Re and to take part in its circuit of the sky and the nether-world means that the deceased receives a share in the divine life which enables Re to rise from the dead every morning in the East. Then we hear that the deceased is permitted to partake of the same food and drink as Re and Thoth and that he may reside where these gods reside (pyr. 128/9). Thoth performs his work as psychopomp in an even profounder sense by initiating the deceased in the secret wisdom which he possesses.

¹ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 96.

² NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 23, 2.

³ *Op. cit.* 160.

⁴ C.T. I, 308; NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 42, 10.

⁵ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 181, 12.

⁶ C.E. SANDER-HANSEN, *Die religiösen Texte auf dem Sarg der Achmesneferibre*, 1937, p. 66, 68, 79, 80, 84, 94, 100, 101, 102, 106,

⁷ ROEDER, *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Ägypten*, p. 268.

Thus the deceased praises himself on knowing what Thoth knows.¹ This must not be underestimated, for Thoth is called 'the omniscient'.² Elsewhere the deceased announces that Thoth has taught him the secrets of the night, presumably of the realm of the dead.³

The most important benefaction performed by Thoth for the deceased is his vindication of him at the judgment of the dead. The mythic-ritual pattern is clearly distinguishable in this deed, for the deceased turns to Thoth with the following supplication: "O, Thoth, who vindicated Osiris against his enemies, vindicate also N.N. against his enemies..."⁴ The judgment of the dead is one of the most famous themes in the history of Egyptian religion. It is very tempting to pursue this subject further, but there is no room for such digressions in the scope of this study. Moreover the material is very well known and has already been thoroughly studied.⁵ Consistency therefore dictates that attention be paid exclusively to Thoth's share in this judgment of the dead made in the presence of Osiris and his 42 judges. The vignettes illustrating Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead, whose purpose was to pilot the deceased safely through the judgment of the dead, show Thoth with his writing tablet in his hand, standing beside the scales on which the deceased's heart is weighed against a feather, the sign of Ma-a-t. In this representation Thoth plays a subordinate role. He is the secretary, or rather the clerk of the court, who, unmoved and business-like, records the outcome of weighing the heart. Apparently he is given no opportunity of speaking on behalf of the deceased to Osiris and his judges. There is no indication that he would be permitted to tip the scales in favour of the deceased. It is the balance that decides objectively and impersonally the fate of the deceased: whether he is to be permitted to share eternal life with Osiris, or to be devoured by the monster at the foot of the scales, ready to pounce on everyone who falls short of the standard of Ma-a-t.

Fortunately the Egyptian was not consequent in his conceptions of the judgment of the dead. He apparently believed that impersonal, implacable justice was not the only all-decisive instance in this matter.

¹ C.T. II, 154, 266.

² NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 116, 7.

³ *Op. cit.* 114, 8/9.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, 18; BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 57 sq.

⁵ J. SPIEGEL, *Die Idee vom Totengericht in der ägyptischen Religion*, 1935; *Le jugement des morts*, Sources orientales, IV, 1961.

After all it was a law suit in which the deceased could plead his case. This idea underlies the speeches made by the deceased in Spell 125. One of the pronouncements is the famous "confession négative" during which the deceased addresses his judges one by one. He wants to exonerate himself from all sorts of sins. It is interesting to determine the categories of crimes to which he pleads innocent. Most of the crimes enumerated are of an ethical nature: stealing, killing, cheating with weights and measures, committing sexual debauchery. Other sins can be classified as cultic misdemeanours: abusing the godhead, skimping on the offers. A third category of crimes falls outside this framework. It comprises violations of the cosmic order: the damming of flowing water, the extinguishing of fire, the stifling of budding life.¹ *Summa summarum*: the deceased professes that he is absolutely innocent and pure. He is *ma-a-kheru*, righteous.

It has already become apparent that the judgment of the dead is not constructed strictly and logically on one basic concept. This is also discernible in the composition of Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead, for it contains an 'epilogue' based on the principle that the 42 judges have the right to interrogate the deceased. In the framework of a lawsuit this is a legitimate idea. Now the remarkable thing is the subject of the interrogation of the deceased. Not his virtues nor his vices, but his knowledge of the details of myths and rituals which are only partially comprehensible to us, for the text only contains brief and rather enigmatical references. In all probability the questions and answers pertain to the myth and the mysteries of Osiris. In the second instance the parts of the chamber which the deceased wishes to enter, e.g. the doorposts, the threshold, the key and the floor ask the deceased to name their names. These appear to be mythical names. The deceased must therefore prove his familiarity with their being before he is permitted to enter.

As it happens, the judgment of the dead is not quick justice, as the scene of the weighing of the heart against the symbol of Ma-a-t suggests. It is a proper legal proceeding in which the deceased is permitted to defend himself, or rather to demonstrate his innocence and his vindication.² To this end he has legal aid. This has already appeared from the quotation in which he beseeches Thoth to vindicate him just as he vindicated Osiris. This implies that a voice in the outcome of the

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 125, Einleitung, Confession négative.

² ROEDER, *Urkunden*, p. 281.

trial is ascribed to Thoth. In fact it does happen that Thoth has a decisive voice in this matter. In the Anu Papyrus Thoth, standing beside the scales, is called : "the one who decides about justice". On this occasion Thoth himself says : "I speak justice about the heart of N.N., whose soul has witnessed against him. His being has been found just on the great scales, and no crime has been discovered in him." The ennead which acts as jury on this occasion then says to Thoth : "This thy verdict from thy mouth is correct and a testimonial for N.N. He has no sin and shall experience no punishment from us, the monster (*mm.t*) may not take possession of him". According to this version Thoth's competency encompassed more than that of an advocate. He has a decisive voice in the case. Naturally the case is tried before Osiris and his judges. Nowhere is it stated that Osiris as supreme judge passes the final verdict. In the same quotation the gods of the ennead assent to the acquittal spoken by Thoth. The only possible conclusion is that Thoth has the final say.

The full implication of this only becomes evident on a scrutiny of the term *šmꜣ'-hrw* meaning 'to vindicate'.¹ The concept *mꜣ'-hrw*, which is also used in a non-religious context and then means 'righteous, irreproachable', is here a specifically religious concept. It appears that the two components of the concept are separable. Thus a deceased's wish is : "may my *hrw* be *mꜣ'* in the chamber (of the judgment of the dead), for I was *mꜣ'* of *hrw* on earth". There are also remarkable passages in which it is said that the words (*mdw*) or the heart (*jꜣ*) or the character (*sp*) of the dead are *mꜣ'*. This must mean that the person in question answers to the standard of Ma-a-t in the components of his being.

Now both from the 'confession négative' and the interrogation by the judges and by the component parts of the chamber to which the deceased wishes to be admitted it can be inferred that *mꜣ'-hrw* not only pertains to the ethical virtue, the irreproachable conduct of the deceased. More is at stake. The religious worth of the deceased is also in question. In the final instance, Ma-a-t is a cosmic order with which man must be in harmony. He is *mꜣ'-hrw* when his *hrw* really is *mꜣ'*. Now his creative faculty is expressed in his *hrw*, his word, his voice. That is the divine element in him. For that matter the creative word plays an important part both in the myth which describes Re's creative work and in the theology which attributes the creative word to Ptah. In the latter doctrine Thoth is even the personification of the creative utterance.

¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*. p. 68 sq.

Little wonder that Thoth is said to have the power of vindicating the deceased, of declaring him *mꜣꜥ-hrw*. This could take place when Thoth had established that not only the ethical virtue, but also the religious worth of the deceased had been guaranteed.

It goes without saying that the deceased entertained a great affection for Thoth. His passionate desire was to be admitted to the retinue of Thoth. ¹ Two spells of the Book of the Dead are entitled "Spell to be at the side of Thoth." ² Indeed the deceased earns for more. He identifies himself with Thoth. He asseverates that he is as strong as Thoth, ³ that he is Thoth the strongest of the gods, ⁴ that he is Thoth who assisted Osiris. ⁵

¹ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch*, 183, 2.

² *Op. cit.* 95, 96.

³ SANDMAN HOLMBERG, *Ptah*, p. 103.

⁴ C.T. I, 314.

⁵ NAVILLE, *Todtenbuch* 183, 41 sq.; SANDER-HANSEN, *op. cit.* p. 138.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CULT OF THOTH

A) CULTIC LOCATIONS

According to their Greek names, two places were centres of the cult of Thoth, namely Hermopolis parva in the Delta and Hermopolis magna in the Nile Valley half way between Cairo and Thebes. Undoubtedly there once stood in both places imposing temples where Thoth was worshipped with elaborate ritual. Little has remained of these edifices. The museum in Cairo has a naos dedicated to Thoth which represents the meagre remnant of the temple in the former city. ¹ At El-Ashmunên where once Hermopolis magna lay, a few remnants of the original temple can be found. ² The same can be said of the temple of Thoth at Zifta ³ in the Delta and at El-Kab ⁴ in Upper Egypt. Finally remains of a Thoth sanctuary have been found to the south of Medinet Habu at a place called Qasr-el-Agûz. ⁵ Further details about the cultic sites of Thoth are entirely lacking. It may safely be assumed that in earliest times Thoth was venerated and had sanctuaries throughout all Egypt. This assumption is based on data concerning the worship of Thoth in the Greco-Roman age, when Thoth still appears to have been popular. Then he was honoured as legislator and wise magician who combats noxious animals, especially the snake. He was thought to be the father of the ibis, and as a result ibis graveyards were apparently a common phenomenon. ⁶ Although these facts pertain more to the private worship of Thoth than to the official cult, the conclusion which may be drawn from them is that there were considerably more cultic sites of Thoth in the classical period of Egyptian religion than the above-mentioned temple ruins would suggest.

Unfortunately no rituals of the Thoth cult have been handed down to us. The worship may be assumed to have followed the pattern known

¹ B. PORTER and R.L.B. MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography*, 1929, IV, p. 30.

² *Op. cit.* IV, p. 167.

³ *Op. cit.* III, p. 44.

⁴ *Op. cit.* II, p. 187/8.

⁵ *Op. cit.* II, p. 112.

⁶ L. ΚΑΚΟΣΥ, *Problems of the Thoth-Cult in Roman Egypt*, 1963.

to us from the text describing the programme of the daily service.¹ For the rest our knowledge of the staff of priests who served Thoth is minimal. The name of the high priest of Hermopolis is interesting: He is called 'the great one of the five'. These five are said to be Thoth and four other gods. The later ogdoad is said to have been formed by the duplication of these four². The clerks can be considered the unofficial servants of Thoth. They were deeply attached to their patron and paid homage to him in songs in which they and Thoth himself praise highly the office of secretary to Re.

The statements about the festivals celebrated in Thoth's honour are not very colourful. These festivals must date from the earliest days, for already in the Pyramid Texts mention is made of a festival of Thoth (pyr. 2218). In the festival calendar studied by S. SCHOTT, there is a Thoth festival on the 26th of the first month of the year, the month named after Thoth.³ At Esna these festivals in honour of Thoth were celebrated in this month on the 4th, 19th and the 21st. The calendar notes for the 19th: "festival for Thoth, the very great, in the whole country", and for the 21st: "celebrate 'the triumph of Thoth' in the presence of Re".⁴ These annotations lift a corner of the veil enfolding these festivities. The first statement confirms the assumption expressed above that Thoth was honoured throughout all of Egypt. 19 Thoth would then be a general holiday for Thoth. The second annotation suggests that on 21 Thoth a cultic performance was held which dramatised Thoth's victory over his enemies. Since Re's presence is mentioned, the obvious conclusion is that this play enacted Thoth's defeat of Re's opponents.

B) PERSONAL VENERATION

Strangely enough we are better informed about the personal worship of Thoth than about his official cult. Generally it is the other way round in Egyptological studies: there is an abundance of information about the state religion, but nothing whatsoever about the belief of the individual. An exception to this rule is formed by the texts on the memorial stones from the Theban necropolis, which reveal the religious feelings

¹ A. MORET, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte*.

² BOYLAN, *Thoth*, p. 157.

³ S. SCHOTT, *Altägyptische Festdaten*, 1950, p. 82.

⁴ S. SAUNERON, *Les fêtes religieuses d'Esna*, p. 11.

of the workers stationed there.¹ Similarly the personal piety evoked by Thoth is known from a number of hymns dealt with in a study by the present author.² Here this theme may be discussed in a different light. These hymns owe their interest to the fact that they do not derive from simple folk such as the labourers who left us the above mentioned texts from the Theban necropolis, which documents therefore reflect 'the Religion of the Poor', as B. GUN puts it. The hymns were composed by people who can be said to have belonged to the intelligentsia of ancient Egypt. A number of poets were clerks and were therefore people of a certain degree of erudition. A remarkable feature of these songs is the lack of any reference to the important function fulfilled by Thoth in the myth as advocate of Osiris and Horus and counsel for the dead. The hymns are inspired by feelings of affection cherished for Thoth by living people. The poets proclaim the glory of the deity as legislator, as the merciful god who rewards with blessing the fidelity of his followers, especially the clerks, and is the refuge of all who have suffered injustice. This characterisation of the hymns must be explained point by point.

In the first place we see that the poets extol Thoth above all other gods. They call upon these gods to pay homage to Thoth :

"O, ye gods, who art in haeven,
O, ye gods, who art (on earth),
honour him, extol him, pay him homage." ³

Another poet goes further and declares that for him Thoth is the only god :

"praised be thee, Thoth, Lord of Hermopolis,
who hath created himself,
he was not born, the sole god." ⁴

It would be a mistake to interpret this quotation as an expression of monotheism. In the strict sense of the word, ancient Egypt did not in principle ever have a belief in one god only, even though there were monotheistic trends, such as in the renowned theology of Amenophis IV

¹ A. ERMAN, *Denksteine aus der thebanischen Gräberwelt*, Sitzungsberichte d. Berl. Ak. d. Wiss., 1911, p. 1986 sq.; B. GUN, "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt," *J.E.A.*, Volume II. p. 8 sq.

² C.J. BLEEKER, *Thoth in den altägyptischen Hymnen*. Ex Orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren oblata, I, 1972, p. 3 sq.

³ TURAJEFF, "Zwei Hymnen an Thoth," *Z.Ä.S.* 33, 1895.

⁴ ED. MEYER, "Die Stele des Horemheb," *Z.Ä.S.* 1958, p. I. sq.

Akhnaton. The utterance quoted above could be termed monolatry, because the poet placed all his faith in Thoth and worshipped him exclusively. Parallels of this type of piety occur in the literature of wisdom, where mention is made of God, or the God, without naming him, as the divine being who has absolute authority.¹

Even though Thoth is so exalted, he can still be approached directly by his followers, thanks to his gentle character. It is said of him :

"He is the lord of friendliness"²

"God of incomparable goodness."³

What gives the followers of Thoth a feeling of safety is the fact that they can rely on him as the great legislator. It is known that "the law of Thoth is firmly established". Hence it can be said that "the god Thoth is like a shield behind me."⁴ Thoth stands behind his faithful followers. He protects them from behind. To stand behind someone is the typical position of the protector according to the Egyptian way of thought.

The people therefore turn frankly to Thoth for help when injustice has been done, as appears from an interesting letter to Thoth. The author of the letter, who was an official in the temple of this god, complains of his scandalous ill-treatment at the hands of a colleague. He asseverates that he left his previous position out of love for Thoth. Now Thoth is his only refuge. "I (now) have no human master".⁵

Such a supplication for assistance in time of need and when injustice is suffered will surely not be in vain, for it is known that Thoth comes to the aid particularly of the pious, humble man. In poetic metaphors the following quotation testifies to this :

"Thoth, thou, sweet well for someone
who suffers thirst in the desert.
He is closed for him who speaks
and he is open for him who is silent.
If the silent one comes, then he finds the well,
when the hot one (comes), then thou art (hidden ?)"⁶

¹ *Het boek van de wijsheid van Amenemope, de zoon van Kanecht*, vertaald door W.D. VAN WIJNGAARDEN, 1930.

² TURAJEFF, *op. cit.*

³ *Op. cit.*

⁴ J. DE HORRACK, "Sur un Ostrakon du Musée du Louvre, Lettre à Monsieur le Docteur Lepsius," *Z.A.S.* 6, 1868, p. 1. sq.

⁵ G.H. HUGHES, "A Demotic Letter to Thoth," *J.N.E.S.* 17, 1958, p. 1 sq.

⁶ SALLIER, I, 8, 2 sq.; ERMAN, *Literatur*, p. 377.

This citation becomes clearer when placed in juxtaposition with other texts in which a similar picture of the truly pious is drawn. These are the aforesaid texts from the Theban necropolis and the literature of wisdom. In them we find the ideal of 'the silent one'. As in our quotation, 'the hot one' is his counterpart. Pursuing this line further we encounter the already discussed ideal of the *ma-a-tj*, that is the man who lives in harmony with Ma-a-t. His picture is painted in numerous texts. He is the disciplined, the modest, the patient, the pious one. His counterpart is the passionate, the avaricious, the contentious, the self-opinionated one.¹

¹ BLEEKER, *Ma-a-t*, p. 28 sq.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THOTH

Thoth is not a god of the moon, but a moon-god. There is a subtle difference between these two concepts which must be borne in mind in order to understand the character and significance of Thoth. Thoth manifests himself in and through the moon. This celestial body is the nature-substratum of his being. Nevertheless his nature surpasses the moon in all directions. Thoth is an imposing and characteristic, divine personality who wields great authority in the world of gods and mortals.

In common with all moon-gods, Thoth is enveloped in an atmosphere of mystery. Therefore more thought has been spent on his origins than on that of other gods. There is even a demoniacal trait in his character, an inexplicable hostility towards Osiris. The fascination of his exceptional accomplishments, however, consigns this peculiarity to oblivion. In particular he is characterised by great wisdom and profound insight.

Armed with this wisdom, he is the ideal god to found and maintain order in the world of gods, and in the regions of men. He is competent to do so, for as secretary and deputy of Re he is authorised to act as legislator. Thus he sees to it that Ma-a-t prevails in all fields of life and the world. He is "the lord of the laws" who teaches the gods the knowledge of the cosmic order and who stands by the pharaoh, the highest authority on earth, in his administration of government. The birth and coronation of the monarch take place under his supervision. He determines the titles and the regnal years of the pharaoh and together with Horus renews the vitality of the regent.

The merits of Thoth for the human community can best be characterised by calling him a 'cultural hero'. This means that he is the founder of the culture. He gave mankind the spoken word and created a diversity of languages. He introduced the art of writing and is therefore highly esteemed by the guild of clerks who praise him in their poems. He laid down the rules of law and does not hesitate to punish severely the transgressors of the divine commandments. In particular he did much for the cult. The ritual derives from him. On certain occasions he acts as priest, and by virtue of his magic powers he also practises medicine. He is the patron of physicians. Since he possesses the power to promote or check fertility, he can also determine man's destiny.

The significance of Thoth can best be measured from the way he settles the conflict between certain gods and manages to maintain the peace. He succeeds in reconciling the enraged sun-eye with Re. He separates Horus and Seth, who have mortally wounded each other in battle, and he heals their wounds. In particular he restores intact the eye of Horus. He pacifies the savage goddess called Tefnet, whose abode is in distant regions. He persuades her to come to Egypt, where she is transformed into a beautiful and amiable goddess. After Osiris is murdered by Seth, he helps to resuscitate Osiris. In the legal proceedings between Osiris and Seth and between Horus and Seth, he acts as advocate of Osiris and Horus and ensures their vindication. It is on this mythic example that the deceased pins his hopes. He turns to Thoth with the supplication to vindicate him in a like manner, for Thoth has a decisive voice in the judgment of the dead.

In the previous chapters the meaning of the myths in which Thoth acts as peace-maker was investigated, so that there is no need to do so here. Now the function which Thoth fulfils among the gods and the mortals must be briefly characterised. This can best be done by the Egyptian verbs *šhṭp* and *šmꜣ'-hrw*. Thoth is the confirmed opponent of Seth, "the god of confusion". Thoth abhors disorder and disruption. Ever and again he restores equilibrium and creates harmony (*šhṭp*). On the other hand he sees that justice is done to gods and mortals (*šmꜣ'-hrw*). He takes care that Ma-a-t is respected in the universe.

Finally the affection felt for Thoth by the Egyptian can best be estimated from the warm tone of admiration and attachment that reverberates in the many hymns devoted to him. Thoth proves to be a deity who is present in the daily life of his followers, not just a distant, mythological figure. The enthusiastic proclamation of a clerk who has installed an image of Thoth in his house testifies to this :

"My house is delighted
since the deity entered it.
It prospers and is (richly) furnished,
since my Lord went into it." ¹

¹ *Anast.* III, 4, 12 sq.; ERMAN, *Literatur*, p. 378.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HATHOR AND THOTH : TWO KEY FIGURES OF THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION

The summary of the results of this study can be stated briefly. The character and significance of Hathor and Thoth have been clearly delineated in the relevant chapters. A reproduction of these two images is unnecessary. All that remains is the discussion of two points : the verification of the insight acquired against the principles set forth in chapter I, and a further argumentation of the tenet contained in the title of this work that Hathor and Thoth really can be designated key figures of the ancient Egyptian religion.

It would seem pedantic to argue that the present author has proved that he is right about all the principles dealt with in chapter I. To confine oneself to the discussion of a few salient pronouncements is more elegant.

First the observations on the nature and function of the myth in ancient Egypt. My postulation is that the Egyptian "did not translate his mythical knowledge of truth into a dramatic story, rather into diverse rituals and symbols sanctioned by mythical allusions". The investigation has confirmed the truth of this postulation. There is no real myth connected with Hathor which emanates directly from her being. Her character and significance must be deduced from her many figurations, from her attributes and from the festive rituals celebrated in her honour. It is a rather different matter with Thoth. He fulfils an important function in the framework of various myths. These "myths", however, occur in variable forms and add nothing to the qualities already possessed by Thoth.

Furthermore it is important to note that the thesis about the homogeneity of the divine figures has been confirmed. In other words the relationship of Hathor and Thoth with the other gods and goddesses was clarified, and their own figures became more sharply delineated when they were presumed to be typologically homogeneous. One implication of this is that the family relationship in which both deities respectively are placed has more of a symbolic than a real significance. Hathor especially is much too independent a personality to be committed to a particular mythological framework. Originally

she did not even have a partner. Thus Hathor's association with certain goddesses derives from the presence of analogous traits, but is never based on identity. This viewpoint brings order in the confused mythical complex surrounding the sun-eye and the moon-eye. It has appeared that a number of figures must be distinguished, since they differ typologically. For example there are (a) the wrathful sun-eye, the scorching sun, (b) the sun-eye that is eclipsed, (c) the savage goddess who is enticed to Egypt from a distant land, (d) the moon-eye that is mutilated during its metamorphosis. Only if a distinction is made between these four, interwoven figures can the relationship of Hathor on the one hand and Thoth on the other to the deities be clarified.

The second point to be noted is the place of Hathor and Thoth as "key figures" in the Egyptian pantheon. To support the correctness of the qualification reference must be made to the observation in chapter I about the functional structure of Egyptian polytheism. There it was argued that the best way to understand the significance of the Egyptian gods is to consider the function they fulfil in Egyptian religion, the dominant ideas of which are Creation, Maintenance of the World Order, Procreation, Eternal Life. Re heads the list as creator of the world system. Osiris closes it as the bestower of eternal life. The actual religious life is governed by Hathor and Thoth, being respectively the goddess of creative élan and spiritual transport, and the god who establishes peace and continually restores world harmony.

Even though Hathor and Thoth are key figures, this does not mean they are linked with each other in the polytheistic world of the gods. Both have too striking a personality for that. Nonetheless it is evident that they are related in a way and that they counterbalance each other. This is most manifest in the influence exercised by Thoth on Hathor. The texts say that it is part of Thoth's duty to calm down Hathor each day.¹ Elsewhere Thoth is made to utter a eulogy praising Hathor as the personified year, as the divine being who daily brings good fortune to man and to whom Thoth wishes she may have a rich and sound life.²

Finally new light can be brought to bear on the significance and the function of these two deities and on their inter-relationship if they are compared with Dionysos and Apollo. These Greek gods are so well

¹ H. JUNKER, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, p. 7, 41, 42.

² K.H. BRUGSCH, *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum, altägyptische Inschriften*, 1968, II, p. 220 sq.

known that only a few phrases are needed to sketch their characters. Dionysos, the god of the grapevine which provides the juice that makes the sap of life rise, excites sacred ecstasy. Apollo urges self-reflection, moderation and obedience to meaningful order.¹ More strongly than the other gods, even more than Zeus, Dionysos and Apollo left their mark on Greek religion. Together they are the key figures of the Greek religion, in the same way as Hathor and Thoth in the ancient Egyptian religion. The ideological affinity and the grandeur of the Egyptian and the Greek religions are most clearly manifested in the remarkable correspondence between these godly couples, who are not really couples, but who, in their inter-relationship, personify one of the most magnificent concepts of the ancient religions.

¹ W.F. OTTO, *Die Götter Griechenlands*, 1929; W.F. OTTO, *Dionysos, Mythos und Kultus*, 1933, H. JEANMAIRE, *Dionysos, Histoire du culte de Bacchus*, 1951.

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